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California

CABERNET SAUVIGNON IS STILL THE KING

As wine writers and critics, our editors spend a lot of time researching the next big thing: Which regions of the world are hot? What grape variety is poised to take off? Who are the new winemakers to watch? Sometimes, amid all that clamor, it's easy to overlook the basics, like California's Napa Valley and its ironclad affinity for Cabernet Sauvignon.

In this issue, Contributing Editor Steve Heimoff delivers the forest (Napa Valley Cabernet) and the trees (hot regions and star winemakers). The top scorers include wines from newcomers Arkenstone—the 2006 is the Krausz family's first commercial release, from high on Howell Mountain—and Au Sommet, a Heidi Barrett project based atop Atlas Peak. Yet mixed in with this month's highflying rookies (the 2008 is the first Au Sommet produced) are highly rated wines from such stalwarts as Charles Krug, Diamond Creek, Merryvale and Newton.

Of course, California vineyards can grow other grape varieties as well, and this issue includes numerous reviews of Merlot, Pinot Noir, Syrah

and Zinfandel, as well as Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc and Pinot Gris. But if Pinot Gris is a favorite, read on a few more pages and peruse Paul Gregutt's reviews of Oregon wines, where that variety often takes center stage.

To complement our cover story, this issue of the Buying Guide also contains extensive sections on Argentina, to match our coverage of that country's burgeoning success (pages 32–36). Elsewhere in this month's Buying Guide, our expert reviewers look at the latest releases from France's Cahors and Languedoc-Roussillon regions, South Africa, Austria, Germany, Greece and Italy, including a section specially devoted to the wines of Sicily. On this warm, Mediterranean island filled with intriguing indigenous varieties, Cabernet Sauvignon is thriving, either bottled on its own or as part of proprietary blends.

Finally, remember that the reviews appearing in print represent only a fraction of the wines we taste every month. For all of our reviews, visit buyingguide.winemag.com.

—JOE CZERWINSKI

RED WINES

CABERNETS & BLENDS

97 Arkenstone 2006 Obsidian (Howell Mountain); \$120. This is a devastatingly good Bordeaux blend from Howell Mountain. Based on Cabernet, it has all the flavor you could ask for in blackberries, cherries, cassis, chocolate, herbs, spices and sweetly smoked oak. But the structure is awesome. Near perfect tannins, soft and intricately firm, and grand acidity make for a total Cabernet experience. Tremendous now, and should age for years. —S.H.

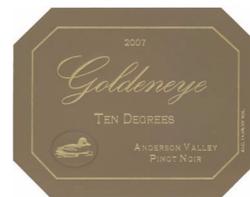
97 Au Sommet 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (Atlas Peak); \$250. So good, so rich, so stunning, it's just a joy to drink even now in its youth. Defines the Heidi Barrett style of big, ripe, exuberant fruit and a classic structure, enhanced in this case by the firm tannins and fine acids of Atlas Peak. Explosive in blackberry and cherry pie filling and cassis flavors, with a distinct mineral tang that must come from the volcanic soils. Contains 2% Petit Verdot.

Superbly enjoyable, but as a brand new wine, its future is only a guess. Drink now–2014? —S.H.

96 Charles Krug 2007 Limited Release Cabernet Sauvignon (Howell Mountain); \$120. This dramatic, compulsively good Cabernet is the first Howell Mountain Cab ever from the winery. It's enormous and gigantic in volume, with blackberry and cherry pie filling, cassis and oak flavors that scream, yet the tannins are tight, and the wine is so dry, the rich fruit is cloaked in a veil of control. Really defines an important new step for this veteran winery. Drink now–2020. —S.H.

95 Arkenstone 2007 Obsidian (Howell Mountain); \$120. So softly delicious, so complex and sensually satisfying, this Bordeaux blend, which is based on Cabernet Sauvignon and contains all the other classic varieties, is truly a wine to savor. The blackberry and cassis flavors have an edge of chocolate, and the deliciousness is compounded by superbly ripe, sculpted tannins and a long but thoroughly dry

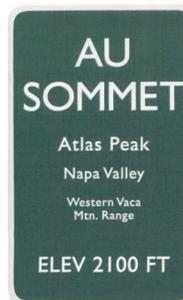
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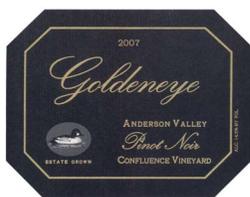
98 Goldeneye 2007 Ten Degrees Pinot Noir (Anderson Valley); \$100. This is a best barrel blend of Goldeneye's several vineyards. It takes its beautifully ripe fruit from Confluence and the tannins of The Narrows to yield a dry, densely constructed and moderately ageable wine of exceptionally high quality and appeal. Blackberries, blueberries, cherries and exotic spices characterize the flavors of this tremendous wine, one of the best of the vintage out of the Anderson Valley. Only 222 cases were produced.



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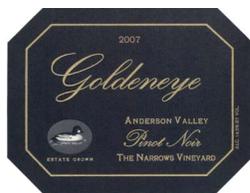
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97 Goldeneye 2007 Confluence Vineyard Pinot Noir (Anderson Valley); \$75. A spectacular Pinot, continuing a string of great vintages from this little vineyard. The year 2007 gave California supernaturally rich but balanced Pinot Noirs, and this is one of them. It's sensational, offering broad, exotic fruit flavors, pinpointed with exotic spices, and exquisitely highlighted with French oak. Truly fine, this small-production wine should age over the next 6–8 years.



and rancio flavors, there's so much going on; aromas of dried orange peel, gingerbread, toasted macadamia nut and a drizzle of molasses lead into flavors of dried red plum and fig dusted with Nutella powder and soft white pepper. Complex, spicy and full, with an endless finish. Imported by Gerard Bertrand USA. **Cellar Selection.**



96 Goldeneye 2007 The Narrows Vineyard Pinot Noir (Anderson Valley); \$75. This is a big Pinot Noir, dark and full bodied and juicy in pomegranates, cherries, red plums and sautéed wild mushrooms, and the interplay of oak with fruit even yields richer notes of milk chocolate. It's devastatingly good, but also too young and fresh now to show its best. With its fine tannins and exquisite balance, this articulate young wine should be best after 2013.

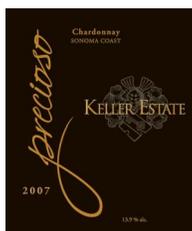
96 Gérard Bertrand 1929 Legend Vintage (Maury); \$380. With only 795 bottles produced, this is a special treat. Although it's ready to drink now, it has the structure and pedigree to age for decades. Loaded with rich nut



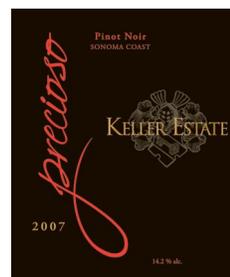
a Heidi Barrett wine, but also shows a firmness of character and a structural dryness that elevate it. Exceptionally flavorful in blackberries and cherries, it has tantalizing hints of herbs, olive tapenade and, of course, intensely fine oak. Drink now–2016.



95 Arkenstone 2007 Obsidian (Howell Mountain); \$120. So softly delicious, so complex and sensually satisfying, this Bordeaux blend, which is based on Cabernet Sauvignon and contains all the other classic varieties, is truly a wine to savor. The blackberry and cassis flavors have an edge of chocolate, and the deliciousness is compounded by superbly ripe, sculpted tannins and a long but thoroughly dry finish. Dazzlingly good, and could develop bottle complexity over the years.



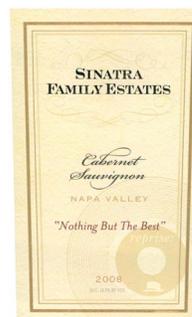
95 Keller Estate 2007 Precioso Chardonnay (Sonoma Coast); \$75. An extraordinary Chardonnay whose complicated richness is balanced with tight acidity and a firm grounding of stony minerals. Brings to mind a great Chablis, with its zesty tang followed by elaborate layers of tropical fruits and pears. Utterly delicious, wildly appealing, a wine that will develop bottle interest over the next six years. Only 97 cases were produced.



95 Keller Estate 2007 Precioso Pinot Noir (Sonoma Coast); \$75. A dazzlingly good Pinot Noir. Hard to exaggerate the precision of flavor and structure. Shows the massively ripe character of the vintage, with a starburst of raspberries, cherries, cola, minerals and spices, while the acidity and tannins are just about perfect. This crowd pleaser is just extraordinary now, and should develop in the bottle over the next six years.

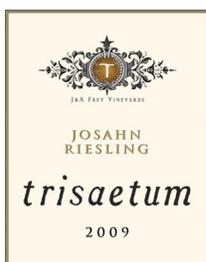


95 Ponzi 2008 Reserve Pinot Noir (Willamette Valley); \$60. A gorgeous wine, lush and refined from the first sniff to the last swallow. Rose petals, cotton candy, chocolate-covered cherries—it's a date in a bottle. As the wine rolls across the palate it seems to gain depth and detail, while keeping the exceptionally pretty fruit flavors front and center. Silky and lightly spicy, with cinnamon, toast, mocha and tobacco highlights. **Editors' Choice.**

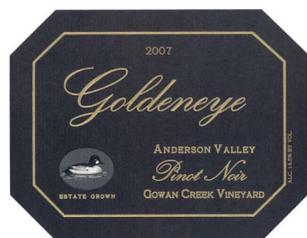


95 Sinatra Family 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$95. Representing a breathtaking advancement over the '07, Sinatra's 2008 Cab is simply delicious. It's fleshy and fat in texture, with a glyceriney richness that makes it almost oily and that, when combined with caramelized oak, turns into nougat. The blackberry, cherry and cassis fruit flavors rise to the occasion. This is truly a stunningly good Cabernet.

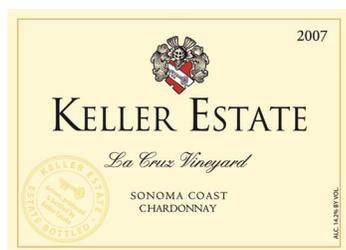
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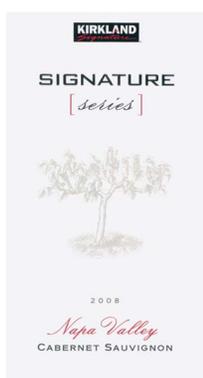
94 Trisaetum 2009 Josahn Riesling (Willamette Valley); \$24. A dry wine, companion to the winery's off-dry estate bottling. This does not give up its fruit as some dry Rieslings do; there is a pleasing mix of lemon, grapefruit, pineapple and apricot, full in the mid-palate, then turning more astringent and cheerily tart in the finish. This is very young, compact, and still tight as a drum; it could be cellared for up to a decade. **Cellar Selection.**



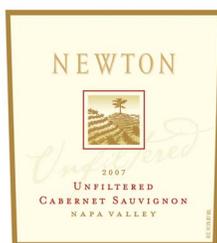
93 Goldeneye 2007 Gowan Creek Vineyard Pinot Noir (Anderson Valley); \$75. Dark and tannic, reflecting the vineyard's location in the cooler, foggier northwest, this Pinot Noir is dramatic in depth of flavor. With its core of blackberries, cherries, blueberries, cola and rhubarb, it's tight and rigid now, suggesting 5–6 years in the cellar.



93 Keller Estate 2007 La Cruz Vineyard Chardonnay (Sonoma Coast); \$36. A few years in the bottle are beginning to age this charming Chardonnay, although its brisk acidity and minerality remain. The pear, guava, nectarine and tangerine flavors are just starting to pick up a dried fruit character. Complex and savory, it's a very fine wine to drink now.



93 Kirkland Signature 2008 Signature Series Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$20. Run, don't walk, to find this amazingly priced Cabernet. It's so good and rich, it easily holds its own against Cabs costing five times as much. Dry and smooth in tannins, it offers a burst of blackberry, black cherry, cassis and chocolate flavors, with a wonderful coating of oak. Drink now–2013. **Editors' Choice.**



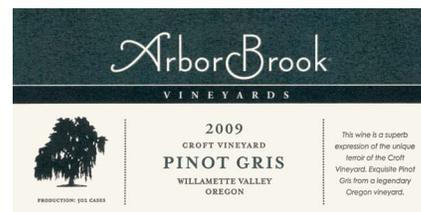
93 Newton 2007 Unfiltered Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$60. A beautiful Cabernet, dry, smoothly tannic and impressive for its volume of flavor. Shows a complex range of blackberries, black currants, minerals and oak, with a long, spicy finish. Elegant and powerful at the same time, it should develop in the bottle over the next decade.



93 Trefethen 2007 Merlot (Oak Knoll); \$35. Easily one of the best Napa Valley Merlots out there. The cool vintage and southerly valley origins have played a role in giving a firm, dry structure to the cherry, currant, olive, mushu plum sauce and herb flavors. A quality wine, distinctive and complex, and for the price, a relative value. **Editors' Choice.**



93 Trisaetum 2009 Estate Riesling (Willamette Valley); \$24. This gorgeous new release, from a young winery with a Riesling focus, is resplendent with an enticing mix of flowers, fruits and stone. The scents well up from the glass and the flavors fill the mouth with a lively zest, pulling together streaks of lemon, lime, nectarine and apricot, accented with citrus rind and wet rock, honey and lemon tea. **Editors' Choice.**



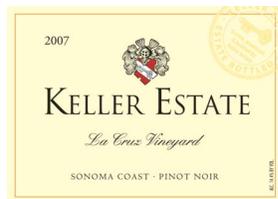
92 ArborBrook Vineyards 2009 Croft Vineyard Pinot Gris (Willamette Valley); \$18. Bright and spicy, this is Pinot Gris with a bit of the grassy bite of a Loire Valley Sauvignon Blanc. Racy and loaded with grapefruit and pineapple flavors, this lingers lazily through a refreshing, acid-driven finish that invites further sipping. **Editors' Choice.**



92 Arista 2008 Mononi Vineyard Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); \$56. Lots of zesty acidity in this Pinot Noir, giving the pomegranate, rhubarb, red cherry and licorice flavors a bright edge. The wine is very dry and complexly layered. Interesting now, if a bit primary in fruit, and balanced enough to develop additional nuances over the next six years.



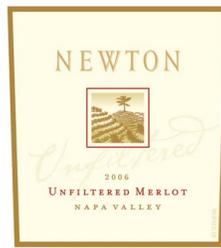
92 Kanzler 2008 Pinot Noir (Sonoma Coast); \$48. This young, impetuous Pinot Noir needs time in the cellar to calm down. It's all about fresh acidity of the citrus kind and ripe, jammy cherry and raspberry fruit, not to mention sweet, unintegrated oak. Give it a good four years.



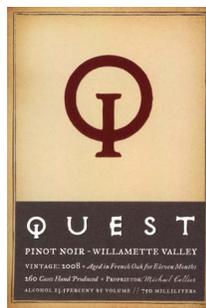
92 Keller Estate 2007 La Cruz Vineyard Pinot Noir (Sonoma Coast); \$44. Made in a light-bodied, lower-alcohol style, this Pinot feels silky and gentle in the mouth. It really delivers when it comes to flavor. Displays big, impressive notes of raspberries, cherries, Dr. Pepper cola, red licorice, beef jerky and smoky sandalwood that are complex and satisfying, and that finish entirely dry. Drink now and over the next four years.



92 Lungarotti 2005 Rubesco Riserva Vigna Monticchio (Torgiano); \$57. Chiara Lungarotti says that this vintage of her vineyard-designate Riserva represents a milestone for her family run estate. Indeed, this is a rich and elegant red wine that shows signature notes of wild berry and spice that reflect her beloved territory: Umbria. Imported by Vin Divino.

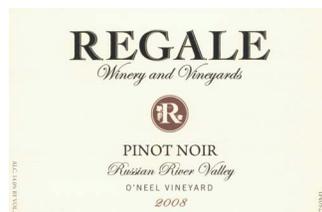


92 Newton 2006 Unfiltered Merlot (Napa Valley); \$60. Soft, slightly hot and peppery in alcohol, but very dry, this Merlot shows intense flavors of cherry marmalade, blackberry essence, dark chocolate and cedar. It's a rich wine to drink with grilled steak. The tannins will balance out the meaty richness.

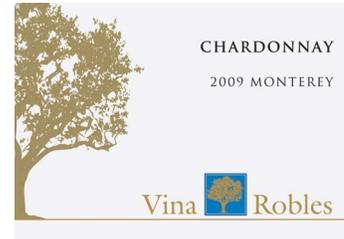


Aged in 28% new French oak, it is just barely kissed with toast and mocha. A wonderful value. **Editors' Choice.**

92 Quest Cellars 2008 Pinot Noir (Willamette Valley); \$26. A fine bottle, fresh and fruity, with cranberry, raspberry and cherry fruit in abundance. It's got depth and vitality, a youthful verve that promises fine ageability.



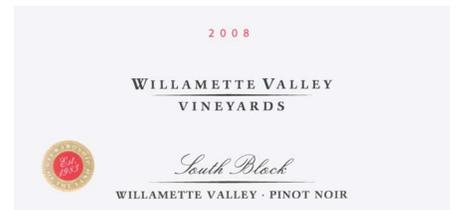
92 Regale Winery and Vineyards 2008 O'Neel Vineyard Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); \$48. The 2008 vintage was cool and resulted in lighter-bodied wines that also were lower in alcohol. That trend benefited wines like this lovely one from Regale. It has a transparent, silky texture, yet is very rich in cherry pie filling, bacon and Indian spices. Feels beautiful and complex now, and should develop bottle nuance over the next six years.



92 Vina Robles 2009 Chardonnay (Monterey); \$19. Just when this Chard seems simple and sweet, the fruit is overtaken by acidity and minerality, taking the tangerine, lime and mango flavors to the next level and making the wine complex and fascinating. Shows how exceptional winemaking can result in exceptional wine. **Editors' Choice.**



92 Virage 2007 Red Wine (Napa Valley); \$45. This first release from the winery is a fine Bordeaux blend based on Cabernet Sauvignon. It shows all the hallmarks of a cooler-climate Napa Valley wine in the dryness, refined tannins and herb-inflected cherries and blackberries. An elegant, balanced wine that should develop over the next 5–7 years.



92 Willamette Valley Vineyards 2008 South Block Pinot Noir (Willamette Valley); \$45. Pretty and complex, this delivers a mélange of interesting flavors. Round, tart fruits—berries and sour plum—mingle with dried leaves, cut tobacco and mushroom. Somehow a citrus streak sneaks into the finish, giving the wine a lemony lift. Delicious already, it can be cellared for another 5–6 years. **Editors' Choice.**

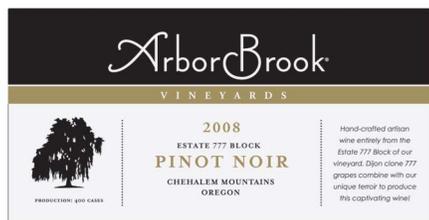
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92 Zaca Mesa 2007 Mesa Reserve Syrah (Santa Ynez Valley); \$42.

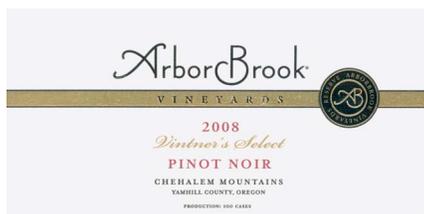
Young and vigorous now, marked by tannins and dryness that mask the fruit, making the wine somewhat aloof. However, the fruit is huge. It's ripe and succulent in blackberries and black cherries, and you'll find additional notes of smoked meat and black pepper for complexity. A wonderful Syrah that needs 3–5 years to blossom.

Cellar Selection.



91 ArborBrook Vineyards 2008 Estate 777 Block Pinot Noir (Chehalem Mountains); \$45.

This is a truly appealing wine that seduces with chocolate-covered cherry flavors and soft, inviting tannins. The balance and concentration are all in proportion, with no reliance on too much new oak (just 25% first use) for the flavor. Details of spice and fresh tarragon enliven the aftertaste.



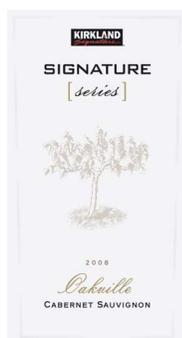
91 ArborBrook Vineyards 2008 Vintner's Select Pinot Noir (Chehalem Mountains); \$60.

This is the reserve, a barrel selection limited to just 100 cases. The selection was done well and is meaningful; this has more grip and body than the excellent Estate 777 Pinot Noir that precedes it in price. A mix of Northwest berries define the fruit, set against moderately stiff tannins with suggestions of caramel from the oak aging. Put this one in the cellar. **Cellar Selection.**



91 J. Lohr 2008 Fog's Reach Pinot Noir (Arroyo Seco); \$35.

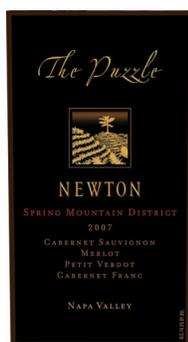
Shows true cool-climate varietal character in the aromas and flavors of cherries, cola, pomegranates and rhubarb pie, with complicating notes from charred oak barrels. Very good, mouthfilling and dry, with brisk acidity. Should develop in the bottle for a few years.



91 Kirkland Signature 2008 Signature Series Cabernet Sauvignon (Oakville); \$19.

Cabernet from Oakville for under \$20? Yes, and it's a really good one. It's dry and full bodied and rich in classic blackberries and cassis. How Kirkland sells it so inexpensively is a mystery. Classically structured, even ageworthy. Drink now–2015.

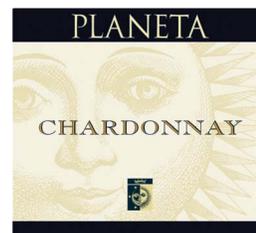
Editors' Choice.



91 Newton 2007 The Puzzle (Spring Mountain); \$80.

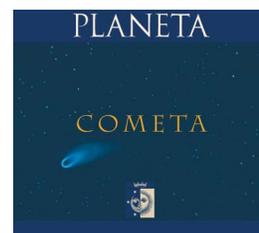
This Cabernet Sauvignon-based Bordeaux blend is very rich and elaborate, a major league hitter for its spectacular fruit and tannins. The flavors are deep and concentrated, suggesting perfectly ripened black-

berries, cassis and milk chocolate, with a minerality that must come from the soil. It's also very soft, in the modern style.



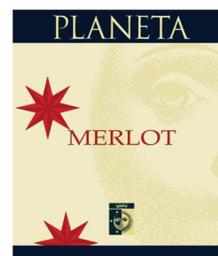
91 Planeta 2008 Chardonnay (Sicilia); \$40.

Here's a smooth and saturated Chard that beams strong with the Sicilian sunshine within. The bouquet opens with warm aromas of yellow rose, stone fruit, almond and creamy vanilla. In the mouth, it shows rich, full flavors that would pair with shellfish or white meat. Imported by Palm Bay International.



91 Planeta 2008 Cometa (Sicilia); \$40.

Cometa is a fantastic expression of Fiano from Sicily that reaches high marks in terms of purity, intensity and persistence. The wine is thick and smooth on the palate and imparts lasting flavors of stone fruit, honeydew melon and almond blossom. Imported by Palm Bay International.



91 Planeta 2007 Merlot (Sicilia); \$40.

This full and generous Merlot (with a small percentage of Petit Verdot in the blend for extra richness) delivers beautifully elegant aromas of cherry, white mineral, spice, leather and dried tobacco. It is smooth and rich with a very fine quality of soft tannin. Imported by Palm Bay International. **Editors' Choice.**

91 Trefethen 2008 Dry Riesling (Oak Knoll); \$22. Like it says, this Riesling is bone dry. It's also crisp in acidity, with a tang of minerals and steel. It gains richness from a rich core of lemon, lime and orange citrus flavors, and possesses that note of diesel that a fine, cool climate Riesling shows. Should develop over the next six years. **Editors' Choice.**



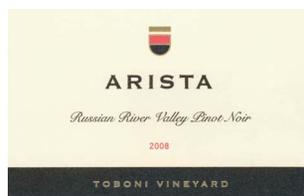
91 Zisola 2007 Doppiozeta (Sicilia); \$60. Opens with a rich, saturated appearance, impressive complexity and intense aromas of ripe fruit and spice. The blend sees Nero d'Avola, Syrah and Cabernet Franc, and you can recognize the amazing fruit characteristics of each variety. The oak is still very present on the nose, but the tannins are soft. Imported by Palm Bay International.



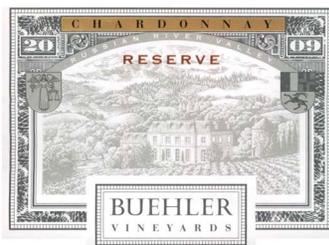
90 Arista 2008 Longbow Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); \$48. Crispness and dryness mark this elegant young Pinot Noir. It feels silky, almost delicate in the mouth, but with powerful cherry, pomegranate and cola flavors. Should develop for up to six years in the bottle.



90 Arista 2008 Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); \$42. Although this isn't one of Arista's single-vineyard bottlings, it's right up there with them, offering rich flavors and a lovely structure. It's dry and silky, with brisk acidity backing raspberry, cherry and sandalwood flavors, and an earthy hint of balsam-splashed beefsteak tomato. Drink now–2013.



90 Arista 2008 Toboni Vineyard Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); \$56. Good blackberry, cherry, cola and pomegranate flavors in this rich, dry wine, but it's also tight in tannins and brisk in acidity. Too hard and unsupple for drinking now. Give it 4–5 years to change in the bottle.



90 Buehler 2009 Reserve Chardonnay (Russian River Valley); \$20. This is the kind of Chardonnay that divides wine lovers into enemy camps. Old World purists will criticize the candied richness. New World fans will love the toasted marshmallow, caramel corn and buttered toast flavors that rest on a solid foundation of pineapple and green apple fruit.



90 Domains Paul Mas 2008 Chateau Paul Mas Clos des Mûres (Coteaux du Languedoc); \$20. Composed of 85% Syrah, 10% Grenache and 5% Mourvèdre and aged in almost exclusively new oak for eight months, this is an opulent wine loaded with dark cherry and raspberry, mocha and garrigue spice throughout. It's full and lush but balanced and well integrated. Drinks beautifully now but should hold for another couple of years. Imported by Palm Bay International.

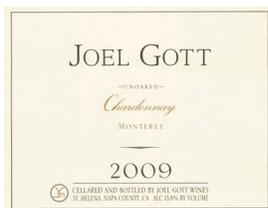


90 Dr. Loosen 2009 Blue Slate Riesling Kabinett (Mosel); \$20. As with all of the Dr. Loosen wines, this blended kabinett is very fruit-forward and direct. The green apple and lime notes are wonderfully pure and balanced. Drink this light, spritely wine over the next few years. Imported by Loosen Bros. USA. **Editors' Choice.**



90 J. Lohr 2009 Falcon's Perch Pinot Noir (Monterey County); \$17. A delicious Pinot Noir to drink now with upscale fare. It's very fruity, offering a burst of raspberries and cherries, together with a coat of sweet, smoky oak. But crisp acidity and smooth, silky tannins provide a balanced structure.

BUYING GUIDE



90 Joel Gott 2009 Unoaked Chardonnay (Monterey); \$16. Believe me, you won't miss the oak barrel influence on this wine. It's so good all by itself. Brightened with crisp Monterey acidity and totally dry, it's rich in pineapple, tangerine, Meyer lemon, lime, mineral and vanilla flavors that will satisfy your Chardonnay tooth. **Editors' Choice.**



90 Q 2008 Collection Meritage (Napa Valley); \$26. Good value in a solid Napa Valley Cabernet blend with plenty of upscale character. It's dry and firm in tannins, with complex flavors of blackberries, black currants, herbs and cedar. Drink now.



90 Redhawk 2008 Estate Pinot Noir (Eola-Amity Hills); \$22. A fine, appealing and complex wine, Redhawk's estate bottling shows more concentration than its less expensive stablemates, with nuances of bloody meat and mint that give it an almost Rhônish character. The alcohol is under 14%, and it drinks like a Burgundy, only with beefier tannins. **Editors' Choice.**



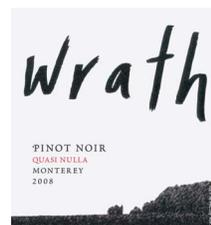
90 Regale Winery and Vineyards 2008 Estate Pinot Noir (Santa Cruz Mountains); \$65. This young Pinot is rather fruity and heavy now, like the liquid version of a raspberry and cherry pie. Yet it has vibrant acidity and fine tannins, leading to the eternal question: Will it age to something more refined? My bet is yes. Give it 5–6 years. **Cellar Selection.**



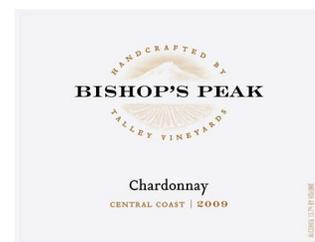
90 Saxenburg Estate 2006 Private Collection Shiraz (Stellenbosch); \$20. Dark and wild, aromas of black berry and raspberry are intertwined with notes of whole tobacco leaf, sweet spice and a hint of licorice on the nose. The palate is lush and concentrated, loaded with more dark fruit flavors that are lifted by accents of white pepper, smoked meat and a mocha-infused finish. Balanced and decadent with an overall creaminess. Imported by MJM Imports. **Editors' Choice.**



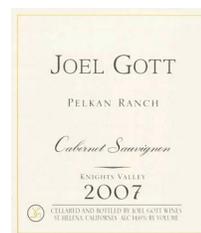
90 Viu Manent 2007 Vibo Malbec (Mendoza); \$40. Plenty of mocha and vanilla combined with racy berry aromas give this an ice cream sundae-type of bouquet. The palate is healthy and snappy, with lively acidity pushing black cherry and meaty plum flavors. Whole and toasty on the finish, with touches of excellence throughout. Impressive for a first effort, with room to improve. Drink now through 2012. Imported by Baystate Wine Co.



90 Wrath 2008 Quasi Nulla Pinot Noir (Monterey); \$38. This Pinot is pure California in its ripe fruitiness. It's explosive in cherry and raspberry jam flavors, with sandalwood and dusty spice notes, and also displays crisp, cool-climate acidity. A delicious wine to drink now.



89 Bishop's Peak 2009 Chardonnay (Central Coast); \$15. Searing acidity marks this wine, which tastes like it has a lot of Edna Valley fruit in the blend. It also shows bright, strong, long hangtime flavors of limes and pineapples. It's actually quite a fine Chardonnay, dry and low in alcohol. A great value at this price. **Editors' Choice.**



89 Joel Gott 2007 Pelkan Ranch Cabernet Sauvignon (Knights Valley); \$35. Beautiful, classic blackberry and currant fruit in this polished Cabernet, along with a rich, tasteful coat of sweet oak. The tannins are thick but refined. The grapes come from this plateau between Napa and Sonoma counties. Tastes young and direct now, but should settle down in 3–4 years.

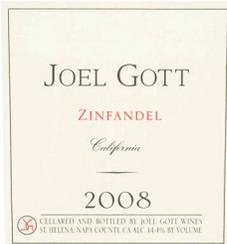
89 The Vineyard House 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$175.

Thick, heavy and jammy now, with blackberry, cherry and raspberry flavors, balanced with good acidity. Almost rustic in the fruity concentration and tart acids. Your best bet is the cellar. Try after 2013.



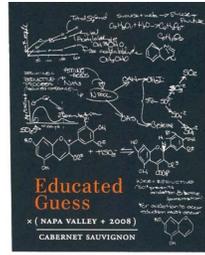
89 Tsantali 2005 Rapsani Reserve (Halkidiki); \$19.

The Rapsani Reserve starts with aromas of bitter cocoa, leather and tobacco, leading into savory sips of plum, chocolate, pepper and cinnamon. Intense and assertive, this wine will offer more generous black fruit as it ages. A serious wine that pairs with robust meat dishes. Imported by Fantis Imports, Inc.



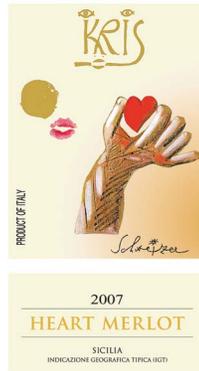
88 Joel Gott 2008 Zinfandel (California); \$17.

A great Zinfandel for the price. It's dry and elegant, with a mouthfeel somewhere between Pinot Noir and Merlot. Really balanced, with soft tannins and acids framing oak-tinged berry and spice flavors. With 30,000 cases produced, it should be easy to find. **Editors' Choice.**



87 Educated Guess 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$20.

This is a very nice Cabernet for drinking now. It offers plenty of delicious chocolate, cherry and cinnamon spice flavors, and is creamy and smooth in tannins.



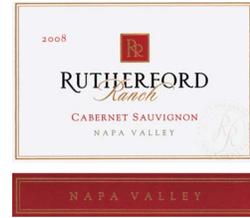
87 Kris 2007 Heart Merlot (Sicilia); \$14.

Franz Haas, one of Italy's best producers from the north, has recently ventured into winemaking in the deep south. This shows great purity of fruit with aromas of raspberry, cherry, white almond and some lingering spice. Imported by Winebow.



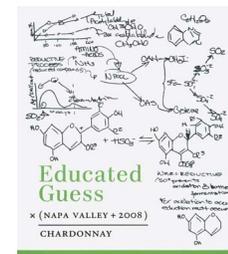
87 Q 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (Sonoma County); \$14.

There is a lot going on in this affordable Cabernet. It shows real character in the dryness, firm tannins and classic flavors of blackberries and cedar, with a tug of herbs. A full-bodied red wine, and a great restaurant pour. **Editors' Choice.**



87 Rutherford Ranch 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$19.

This Cabernet is as soft as velvet, with a clean bite of acidity, and the cherry and blackberry jam flavors are evenly paired with smoky, sweet oak. Drink now, and easy to find, with 30,000 cases produced.



86 Educated Guess 2008 Chardonnay (Napa Valley); \$17.

Ripe and oaky in the modern style, with strong apricot, tangerine, pineapple and peach flavors and a buttery, creamy texture. Offers lots of upfront Chardonnay character.



85 Les Jamelles 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Pays d'Oc); \$11.

Soft and easy to drink, with notes of green plum, lime citrus and fresh green grass throughout. Round but structured with medium acidity and a crisp, clean finish. Drink now. Imported by Cellar Door Selections.

BUYING GUIDE

SPIRITS



93 Canadian Mist Black Diamond Premium Select Whisky (Canada; Brown-Forman Beverages, Louisville, KY); 43% abv, \$16. This leather club chair of a whisky has a nut-brown color and a pert vanilla aroma. The flavor is all on the finish: complex, rich, lingering notes of cocoa, coffee and leather, balanced with the right amount of bite. Good value.



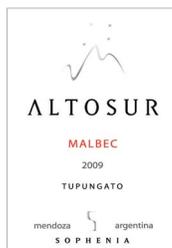
93 John L. Sullivan Irish Whiskey (Ireland; Undisputed International LLC, Washington, DC); 40% abv, \$24. This Bourbon-barrel-finished whiskey is a treat, with a light amber color, caramel and orange peel aroma, and a lingering caramel and spice finish. Soft, smooth and full-bodied.

BEER



97 La Fin du Monde (Tripel; Unibroue, Canada); 9.0% abv, \$10/750 ml. Golden in color with a glowing orange vibrancy throughout, topped by a stunning off-white head that lingers but leaves a sticky lacing behind when it finally subsides. The aromas jump right out of the glass: ripe nectarine, fresh apricot and juicy citrus flecked with clove and peppery spice. The mouth is lively but smooth and creamy, with a great effervescence to keep things peppy. Flavors of biscuit malts, banana, hard pear and more sweet lemony citrus follow in the mouth. The finish is crisp and clean, leaving you perfectly primed for more.

BEST BUYS



88 Finca Sopenia 2009 Altosur Malbec (Tupungato); \$12. Blackberry, rubber and a suggestion of minerality work well as an invitation to this juicy, woody wine that's long and full in the mouth, with dark-fruit flavors of black cherry, blackberry and plum. Woody and toasty, too, but dry and spicy rather than sweet, blowy and creamy. A nice Malbec for all occasions. Imported by Buena Cepa Wines. **Best Buy.**

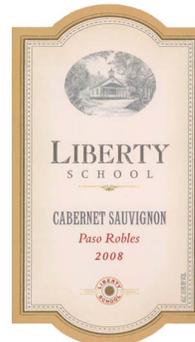


88 Florio NV Fine Sweet (Marsala); \$13. The sweet interpretation of Marsala offers a more dynamic and intense bouquet with aromas of marron glacé, honey-covered almonds, candied fruit and dried prune. Drink it alone after dinner or pair it with a very aged Pecorino cheese. Imported by Banfi Vintners. **Best Buy.**



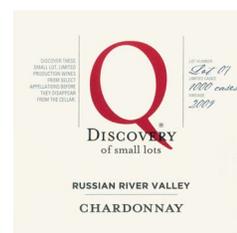
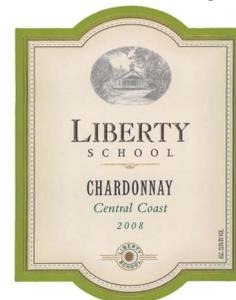
87 Hahn 2009 Pinot Gris (Monterey); \$12. Lots going on in this affordable wine. It's zesty in acidity, with a mineral bite to the pineapple, green apple and pear jam fruit. Straddles the border between dry and honey sweet. **Best Buy.** —S.H.

BEST BUYS



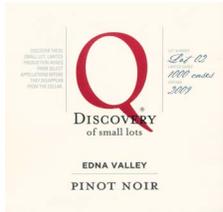
will help. **Best Buy.**

87 Liberty School 2008 Chardonnay (Central Coast); \$12. Good price for a dry, crisp and flavor Chardonnay with some real fancy character. Flatters the palate with opulent pineapple jam, pear, lemon and orange fruit flavors, finished with rich oak. **Best Buy.**



87 Q 2009 Discovery Chardonnay (Russian River Valley); \$11. Packs plenty of punch into an inexpensive, everyday Chardonnay. With brisk, tangy acidity, it offers rich, appealing flavors of pineapples, green apples, vanilla and sweet, creamy butter. **Best Buy.**

BESTBUYS



87 Q 2009 Discovery Pinot Noir (Edna Valley); \$11. Racy and dry, this delicious Pinot Noir offers very pleasant flavors of cherries, currants and cola. It feels silky in the mouth, with zesty acidity for balance. A great value, but case production was only 1,000. **Best Buy.**



86 MandraRossa 2007 Nero d'Avola (Sicilia); \$10. Aged in stainless steel to maintain the freshness of the wine's bright fruit aromas, this is a simple easy-drinking red. The wine shows good harmony and bright cherry and blackberry flavors on the close. Imported by Palm Bay International. **Best Buy.**

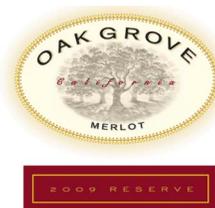


86 MandraRossa 2007 Syrah (Sicilia); \$10. Easy and genuine, this unoaked expression of Syrah carries forth fresh aromas of blueberry, black cherry, spice and black pepper. It's an unassuming red wine that offers the pulp and consistency to pair with spaghetti and meat sauce. Imported by Palm Bay International. **Best Buy.**

BESTBUYS



86 Oak Grove 2009 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon (California); \$8. With pleasantly dry blackberry, blueberry and herb flavors as well as a kiss of oak, this is an eminently drinkable Cabernet. At this price, it's an affordable quaffer for parties. **Best Buy.**



86 Oak Grove 2009 Reserve Merlot (California); \$8. Dry, smooth and surprisingly rich for the price. Shows pleasantly spicy cherry, bacon and herb flavors, with a silk and satin texture. Great value in an everyday Merlot. **Best Buy.**



86 Saronga 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon (Paarl); \$10. Earthy notes of tree bark and licorice root lift the cassis and black plum aromas and flavors. Simple but well structured with medium tannins and a solid finish. Imported by MJM Imports. **Best Buy.**

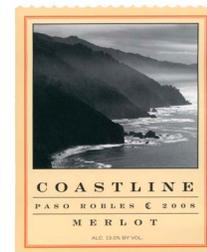
BESTBUYS



85 Blue Fish 2009 Original Riesling (Pfalz); \$9. Light in body despite 12.5% alcohol, this lithe, sinewy Riesling is almost dry in style, with zippy pineapple and citrus fruit tracing a lean path down the palate. Drink now. Imported by Palm Bay International. **Best Buy.**



85 Blue Fish 2009 Sweet Riesling (Pfalz); \$9. The Blue Fish Rieslings are decent efforts from the Niederkirchen cooperative. The 2009 Sweet Riesling features ripe pear and melon balanced by crisp pineapple notes. It's rather soft and sweet, but since that's what it's supposed to be, it's hard to quibble, especially at the price. Imported by Palm Bay International. **Best Buy.**



85 Coastline 2008 Merlot (Paso Robles); \$10. A simple but likeable Merlot, dry and tart, with pretty good flavors of cherries, licorice and smoky oak. Nothing complicated, just an easy-drinking red wine for roasts and grilled meats. **Best Buy.**

CORRECTIONS

The following label was inadvertently omitted from the Best of Year issue's list of Top 50 Spirits.

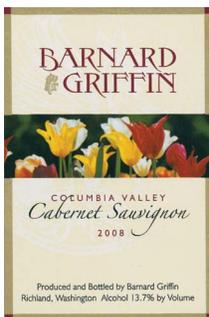


**CLASSIC (96–100)/
HIGHEST RECOMMEN-
DATION**

Old Raj Gin (United Kingdom; Preiss Imports, Ramona, CA); 46% abv, \$50. This is the lower-proof version of the classic Old Raj. Lovely, complex gin bouquet offers aromas of coriander, juniper, anise, orris root, ground pepper, lemon peel, lead pencil, earth and tree bark. Palate entry is creamy, fruity, spicy and minty; midpalate offers layers of botanical complexity over the core juniper taste. Finishes

with a wonderful rush of mint and baking spice. Fabulous.

In the February 2011 issue, the wine referred to as Barnard Griffin's Lot 411 Cabernet Sauvignon was actually the winery's regular Cabernet Sauvignon. The correct label and review appear below.



90 Barnard Griffin 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (Columbia Valley); \$17.

Forward and tasty, with violets on the nose and a friendly mix of plum, cherry and cassis fruit, dotted with cut tobacco, and finished with exceptionally smooth and polished tannins. There are chocolaty barrel notes and a seamlessness to the whole wine that shouts quality all the way. *Editors' Choice.*

finish. Dazzlingly good, and could develop bottle complexity over the years. —S.H.

95 Sinatra Family 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$95.

Representing a breathtaking advancement over the '07, Sinatra's 2008 Cab is simply delicious. It's fleshy and fat in texture, with a glyceriney richness that makes it almost oily and that, when combined with caramelized oak, turns into nougat. The blackberry, cherry and cassis fruit flavors rise to the occasion. This is truly a stunningly good Cabernet. —S.H.

94 Charles Krug 2006 Vintage Selection Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$69.

What a beautiful Cabernet. It's dry and classically elegant, with sweet, ripe tannins framing succulent blackberry, black cherry, violet, cedar and mineral flavors. Really a great wine for drinking now, and so balanced, it will easily negotiate a decade in the bottle. —S.H.

94 Diamond Creek 2007 Volcanic Hill Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$175.

The longer this wine breathes in the glass the better it gets. At first sip, it's obviously a very good wine, richly tannic and deeply impressive in blackberries, cassis and oak, with a firm minerality that grounds it. But as it warms and airs, the fascinating palate begins to unfold. Will age effortlessly for many years. Drink now–2020. *Cellar Selection.* —S.H.

93 Kirkland Signature 2008 Signature Series Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$20.

Run, don't walk, to find this amazingly priced Cabernet. It's so good and rich, it easily holds its own against Cabs costing five times as much. Dry and smooth in tannins, it offers a burst of blackberry, black cherry, cassis and chocolate flavors, with a wonderful coating of oak. Drink now–2013. *Editors' Choice.* —S.H.

93 Merryvale 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$65.

Just delicious, this wine shows its pedigree from some of the best vineyards in the valley, including Merryvale's St. Helena estate. Dry and rich in firm but refined tannins, it offers elaborate flavors of blackberries, blueberries and cherries, while 70% new oak adds layers of buttered toast and caramel. Great for drinking now with the best meats and cheeses you can find. —S.H.

93 Merryvale 2007 Oakville Grade (Napa Valley); \$75.

A beautiful, elegant and dramatic blend for drinking now and over the next 6–10 years. Based on Cabernet, and sourced from vineyards including Beckstoffer ToKalon and Showket, it's flashy in blackberry, blueberry and cassis flavors, with gorgeous, refined tannins. It's throwing some tannins, so you might want to give it a proper decant. —S.H.

93 Newton 2007 Unfiltered Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$60.

A beautiful Cabernet, dry, smoothly tannic and impressive for its volume of flavor. Shows a complex range of blackberries, black currants, minerals and oak, with a long, spicy finish. Elegant and powerful at the same time, it should develop in the bottle over the next decade. —S.H.

92 Arrowood 2006 Monte Rosso Cabernet Sauvignon (Sonoma Valley); \$70.

This Cabernet doesn't show any signs of age, even though it's more than four years old. It's still fresh and powerful in tannins, with intensely concentrated blackberry and cassis fruit. With an impeccable structure, it should easily negotiate the next decade. Cellar it. —S.H.

92 Diamond Creek 2007 Gravelly Meadow Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$175.

This baby Cabernet plays tricks on the palate, showing appealing soft, delicious complexity, then retreating into a cloak of tannins, and then emerging again with sweet fruit and spice. It's bone dry, although the cherries and blackberries show a baked-into-the-pie caramelized sweetness. Give this bottle a good six years in the cellar, and it should continue to evolve for far longer. *Cellar Selection.* —S.H.

92 Folkway 2007 Black Ridge Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Santa Cruz Mountains); \$36.

A beautiful Cabernet, well structured, dry and rich. It feels soft and inviting in the mouth, with waves of ripe blackberries and cassis, and the fine tannins that accompany a good mountain red wine. Contains some Cabernet Franc, which adds cherry richness. Drink now for maximum freshness. —S.H.

92 Merryvale 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Oak Knoll); \$60.

A tremendous wine, satisfying in youth, but this should also age for a while. Made with just 2% Merlot, it's impressive in young Cabernet blackberry and cassis flavors, liberally oaked and sweetly pure in

the finish. The tannins are so soft, yet so refined. Should develop through the decade, but if you drink it now, give it a good decant. —S.H.

92 Sebastiani 2007 Cherryblock Cabernet Sauvignon (Sonoma Valley); \$75. A lovely Cabernet. It comes from the winery's vineyard in the far southern part of the valley, not far from the Carneros line. The wine is medium-bodied, dry, silky and elegantly tannic, with complex cherry, currant, cola and cedar flavors. Should develop bottle complexity over the next 6–8 years. —S.H.

92 Trefethen 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Oak Knoll); \$55. A great, upscale wine to drink now with the best you can pair it with. It shows classic Napa character, with firm, dry tannins, fine acidity and blackberry and black currant flavors. It's almost entirely Cabernet Sauvignon, with tiny additions of other Bordeaux varieties. Give it a good decant, or cellar it for 5–7 years and see what happens. —S.H.

92 Virage 2007 Red Wine (Napa Valley); \$45. This first release from the winery is a fine Bordeaux blend based on Cabernet Sauvignon. It shows all the hallmarks of a cooler-climate Napa Valley wine in the dryness, refined tannins and herb-inflected cherries and blackberries. An elegant, balanced wine that should develop over the next 5–7 years. —S.H.

91 Coup de Foudre 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$95. Made in an exceptionally ripe and strongly oaky way, this wine is rather heavy right now. The Cabernet was blended with some Syrah and Petit Verdot grown in a Calistoga vineyard. There's no questioning the richness, but it's so ripe that the blackberries veer into dark chocolate and prunes. See what it does over the next eight years. —S.H.

91 Diamond Creek 2007 Red Rock Terrace Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$175. Awfully good, a wine that strikes you right off the bat as important and complex. It's dry and densely packed in blackberry and cherry pie filling, red currant, licorice and sweet, smoky oak flavors. Very good and rich, with complicated tannins, and soft enough to drink now, although it should age well. **Cellar Selection.** —S.H.

91 Kirkland Signature 2008 Signature Series Cabernet Sauvignon

(Oakville); \$19. Cabernet from Oakville for under \$20? Yes, and it's a really good one. It's dry and full bodied and rich in classic blackberries and cassis. How Kirkland sells it so inexpensively is a mystery. Classically structured, even ageworthy. Drink now–2015. **Editors' Choice.** —S.H.

91 Merryvale 2007 Profile (Napa Valley); \$150. This Cabernet-based blend of all five Bordeaux varieties is the most inaccessible of Merryvale's '07 portfolio, and it consequently offers the least pleasure now. It's quite rich in blackberries and currants but the tannins are considerable, and 90% new oak buries the fruit under a cloak of char and wood tannins. Feels rustic, but obviously pedigreed and extremely ageable. The score could soar over the next 6–9 years as the wine develops in the bottle. **Cellar Selection.** —S.H.

91 Newton 2007 The Puzzle (Spring Mountain); \$80. This Cabernet Sauvignon-based Bordeaux blend is very rich and elaborate, a major league hitter for its spectacular fruit and tannins. The flavors are deep and concentrated, suggesting perfectly ripened blackberries, cassis and milk chocolate, with a minerality that must come from the soil. It's also very soft, in the modern style. —S.H.

91 Volker Eisele 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$45. With its dryness and firm tannins, there's lots of structural integrity in this Cab. New oak adds the right suggestions of toast and wood spices. It's an elegantly streamlined wine whose nuanced berry, cherry and currant flavors won't overwhelm a beautiful cut of beef. —S.H.

90 Clos Pegase 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$43. This is a blend of grapes from Calistoga to Carneros. The wine shows Cabernet's full-bodied character and rather fierce tannins, although it has an enormous soul of blackberries, black currants and dark chocolate, as well as plenty of new oak. Shuttered and hard now, it should develop bottle complexity over the next six years. —S.H.

90 Conn Creek 2006 Anthology (Napa Valley); \$55. A beautiful, succulent young Cabernet-based Bordeaux blend that delivers plenty of flavor. It's front-loaded with blackberries, cherries, currants and chocolate. Delicious now, but it's a little too soft for the cellar. —S.H.

THE WINE ENTHUSIAST BUYING GUIDE

The Buying Guide includes ratings and reviews of new releases and selected older wines evaluated by *Wine Enthusiast Magazine's* editors and other qualified tasters. On a regular basis the Buying Guide includes reports on special tastings and the wines of specific producers. Regular contributors to our Buying Guide include Senior Editor/ Tasting Director Joe Czerwinski, Assistant Tasting Director Lauren Buzzeo, Executive Editor Susan Kozrzewa, Contributing Editor Michael Schachner and Contributing Reviewer Jean Reilly in New York, European Editor Roger Voss in Bordeaux, Italian Editor Monica Larner in Rome, Contributing Editor Steve Heimoff in Oakland and Contributing Editor Paul Gregutt in Seattle. If a wine was evaluated by a single reviewer, that taster's initials appear following the note. When no initials appear, the wine was evaluated by two or more reviewers and the score and tasting note reflect the input of all tasters.

Each review contains a score, the full name of the wine, its suggested national retail price, and a tasting note. If price cannot be confirmed, \$NA (not available) will be printed. Prices are for 750-ml bottles unless otherwise indicated.

TASTING METHODOLOGY AND GOALS

Tastings are conducted individually or in a group setting and performed blind or in accordance with accepted industry practices. Price is not a factor in assigning scores. When possible, wines considered flawed or uncustomary are retasted.

ABOUT THE SCORES

Ratings reflect what our editors felt about a particular wine. Beyond the rating, we encourage you to read the accompanying tasting note to learn about a wine's special characteristics.

Classic 98–100: The pinnacle of quality.

Superb 94–97: A great achievement.

Excellent 90–93: Highly recommended.

Very Good 87–89: Often good value; well recommended.

Good 83–86: Suitable for everyday consumption; often good value.

Acceptable 80–82: Can be employed in casual, less-critical circumstances.

Wines receiving a rating below 80 are not reviewed.

SPECIAL DESIGNATIONS

Editors' Choice wines are those that offer excellent quality at a price above our Best Buy range, or a wine at any price with unique qualities that merit special attention.

Cellar Selections are wines deemed highly collectible and/or requiring time in a temperature-controlled wine cellar to reach their maximum potential. A Cellar Selection designation does not mean that a wine must be stored to be enjoyed, but that cellaring will probably result in a more enjoyable bottle. In general, an optimum time for cellaring will be indicated.

Best Buys are wines that offer a high level of quality in relation to price. There are no specific guidelines or formulae for determining Best Buys, but they are generally priced at \$15 or less.

SUBMITTING WINES FOR REVIEW

Wines should be submitted to the appropriate reviewing location as detailed in our FAQ, available online via winemag.com/contact. Inquiries should be addressed to Assistant Tasting Director Lauren Buzzeo at 914.345.8463 or email tastings@wineenthusiast.net. **There is no charge for submitting wines.** We make every effort to taste all wines submitted for review, but there is no guarantee that all wines submitted will be tasted, or that reviews will appear in the magazine. All wines must be accompanied by a submission form, which may be downloaded from our Web site.

LABELS

Labels are paid promotions. Wineries and winery representatives are given the opportunity to submit labels, which are reproduced and printed along with tasting notes and scores. For information on label purchases, contact Denise Valenza at 813.571.1122; fax 866.896.8786; or email dvalenza@wineenthusiast.net.

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90 Emblem 2007 Oso Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$50. Lots of rich, ripe varietal flavor in this dry, tannic young Cabernet. It's strong in blackberries and cassis, with a cedary edge that has the scent of a cigar box. Firm enough to develop some bottle complexity over the next 6 years or so. —S.H.

90 Folkway 2007 Revelator (California); \$26. Mainly Merlot, this Bordeaux blend is a combination of grapes from Santa Maria Valley and the Santa Cruz Mountains. It's very rich and likeable now for its crisply acidic flavors of black cherries, red currants and spices, coated with sweet, smoky oak. Give it a brief decant before serving. —S.H.

90 Girard 2008 Artistry (Napa Valley); \$40. Very rich and ripe in fruit, and also rich in new oak. The combination makes for mouth-filling blackberry and cherry pie filling, currant, licorice, dark chocolate and spicy flavors that are frankly delicious. The finish is quick, suggesting this lovely wine is best enjoyed in its youth. —S.H.

90 Q 2008 Collection Meritage (Napa Valley); \$26. Good value in a solid Napa Valley Cabernet blend with plenty of upscale character. It's dry and firm in tannins, with complex flavors of blackberries, black currants, herbs and cedar. Drink now. —S.H.

90 Sebastiani 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Alexander Valley); \$30. Sebastiani knows how to make good Cabernet. It's wired into their hard drive, and with this lovely '07, they've again succeeded. The wine is dry, elegant and drinkable now with upscale fare. It shows the herbal quality of Alexander Valley Cabs, with a sage note to the blackberries, cherries and sweet tobacco. —S.H.

89 Emblem 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Rutherford); \$50. This is a very good Cab to drink now for its firm, dry mouthfeel and ripe flavors of cherries, currants and cedar. It feels elegant and distinguished. But it's also thick in dusty tannins, and should slowly evolve in the bottle for 6–7 years. —S.H.

89 Joel Gott 2007 Pelkan Ranch Cabernet Sauvignon (Knights Valley); \$35. Beautiful, classic blackberry and currant fruit in this polished Cabernet, along with a

rich, tasteful coat of sweet oak. The tannins are thick but refined. The grapes come from this plateau between Napa and Sonoma counties. Tastes young and direct now, but should settle down in 3–4 years. —S.H.

89 The Vineyard House 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$175. Thick, heavy and jammy now, with blackberry, cherry and raspberry flavors, balanced with good acidity. Almost rustic in the fruity concentration and tart acids. Your best bet is the cellar. Try after 2013. —S.H.

88 Elements by Artesa 2007 Elements by Artesa Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa County / Sonoma County); \$20. A really nice, classically structured Cabernet that can stand beside bottles costing far more. The blackberry and cherry flavors have a touch of sweet oak. With savory acidity, it's good to go now. Production was 13,500 cases. —S.H.

88 Peter Franus 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$40. Lots of classic varietal character in this Cabernet. It's very dry and rich in blackberries, cassis and herbs, with a kiss of smoky oak. The tannins are a bit sticky now. Give it 2–3 years in the cellar. —S.H.

88 Sebastiani 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Sonoma County); \$18. A nice Cabernet at a good enough price to drink on a regular basis with a upscale meal. It's dry and elegant, with blackberry, black cherry and currant flavors, elaborated with smoky oak. Shows real charm. —S.H.

87 Bella Victorian Vineyard 2007 Kimberly Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$70. Tons of blackberry, black cherry and cassis flavors in this dry, tannic wine. It's somewhat direct now, like fruit jam tarted up with citrusy acidity. Could age well, but it's a close call to predict. —S.H.

87 Educated Guess 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$20. This is a very nice Cabernet for drinking now. It offers plenty of delicious chocolate, cherry and cinnamon spice flavors, and is creamy and smooth in tannins. —S.H.

87 Janzen 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$33. Tons of blackberry, black cherry and cassis fruit in this wine.

Really impresses for sheer ripeness and varietal purity. Lots of sweet, smoky oak adds to the volume. For all the richness, it's bone dry, with firm tannins. Not one for the cellar, so drink up now. —S.H.

87 Liberty School 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (Paso Robles); \$12. Great price for a Cabernet this nice. It's dry, smooth and classic in blackberry and currant flavors, with a deft touch of smoky oak. Just a bit too acidic; a rich steak will help. **Best Buy.** —S.H.

87 Mossback 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Chalk Hill); \$25. Dry and tannic, with intense blackberry and cassis flavors. It's strong and dense and impressive, with a wonderful mouthfeel. Will it age? Open now through 2014 and see what happens. —S.H.

87 Q 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (Sonoma County); \$14. There is a lot going on in this affordable Cabernet. It shows real character in the dryness, firm tannins and classic flavors of blackberries and cedar, with a tug of herbs. A full-bodied red wine, and a great restaurant pour. **Editors' Choice.** —S.H.

87 Rutherford Ranch 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$19. This Cabernet is as soft as velvet, with a clean bite of acidity, and the cherry and blackberry jam flavors are evenly paired with smoky, sweet oak. Drink now, and easy to find, with 30,000 cases produced. —S.H.

87 Trig Point 2007 Diamond Dust Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Alexander Valley); \$20. A soft, herbal Cabernet, with sage, dill, tobacco, black cherry and mulberry flavors. It's very dry, and has a certain elegance. —S.H.

86 Genuine Risk 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon (Santa Ynez Valley); \$22. A rustic wine, with semisweet blackberry and cherry pie filling flavors and jagged tannins. There's a funky, barnyardy thing you'll either like or won't. —S.H.

86 Oak Grove 2009 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon (California); \$8. With pleasantly dry blackberry, blueberry and herb flavors as well as a kiss of oak, this is an eminently drinkable Cabernet. At this price, it's an affordable quaffer for parties. **Best Buy.** —S.H.

86 Oberon 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$22. Tastes one-dimensional and fruity, like cherries and blackberries baked into a pie. Toasty oak adds vanilla and caramel sweetness. Ultimately, a good, everyday Cab. —S.H.

85 Joel Gott 2008 815 Cabernet Sauvignon (California); \$18. Here's a common, fruity Cabernet for everyday drinking. It's dryish and tart, with blackberry jam, plum and mocha flavors. Drink now. —S.H.

85 Tetra 2006 Red Wine (Napa Valley); \$20. Soft, simple and dry. It's a Cabernet Sauvignon-based Bordeaux blend with ripe blackberry and currant flavors. Good wine for everyday fare. —S.H.

84 Ancient Peaks 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (Paso Robles); \$16. A nice Cabernet to drink now, soft and lush in fruit. The blackberry, cherry, currant and mocha flavors have a spicy, peppery edge. —S.H.

84 Coastline 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (Paso Robles); \$10. Bone dry, but sharp and harsh in texture, with some minty flavors next to the black cherries. Okay for an everyday sipper with casual foods. —S.H.

84 I'M 2009 Deep Rosé Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$15. Heavy and soft. Plenty of jammy cherry and raspberry flavor, but rather inert. Drink now. —S.H.

84 Spellbound 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (California); \$15. Sharp and cutting in acidity, with jammy, tutti-fruity blackberry and cherry flavors, this Cab is totally dry. It's ready to drink now. —S.H.

84 Tin Barn 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Sonoma County); \$29. Rustic and sharp, with an acidic bite to the black currant and raisin flavors. Yet it's dry and refined in tannins. Drink now. —S.H.

84 Tin Barn 2007 Red Wine (Napa Valley); \$34. A bit overripe, with a dry Port-like, acidic taste. The blackberries veer past currants into raisins. Feels hot, too, although the official alcohol is only 14.7%. Drink now. —S.H.

83 Happy Camper 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon (California); \$9. Sweet

and candied, with Life Saver flavors of cherries and blackberries. Lots of acidity, too. Pretty standard, but the price is okay. —S.H.

83 Hilltown 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon (Monterey County); \$7. Pretty standard Cabernet, dry and thin, with blackberry and prune flavors. Still, it's okay for the price. —S.H.

83 Vinum 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (California); \$12. Raw in texture, this common Cabernet will do in a pinch. It has good blackberry flavors, with a touch of oak. —S.H.

81 Parkers Estate 2009 Old Vine Street Cabernet Sauvignon (Sonoma County); \$20. Overripe and Porty, with raisiny flavors, and also very sharp, almost sour in acidity. —S.H.

80 Q 2008 Discovery Cabernet Sauvignon (Alexander Valley); \$11. Barely acceptable. Dry, harsh and vegetal. —S.H.

MERLOT

95 Amuse Bouche 2008 Red Wine (Napa Valley); \$200. One sip is all it takes to understand that this is a vital, impressive and possibly profound wine. A blend of 96% Merlot and 4% Cabernet Franc, it displays the voluptuous richness of a Heidi Barrett wine, but also shows a firmness of character and a structural dryness that elevate it. Exceptionally flavorful in blackberries and cherries, it has tantalizing hints of herbs, olive tapenade and, of course, intensely fine oak. Drink now–2016. —S.H.

93 Trefethen 2007 Merlot (Oak Knoll); \$35. Easily one of the best Napa Valley Merlots out there. The cool vintage and southerly valley origins have played a role in giving a firm, dry structure to the cherry, currant, olive, mushu plum sauce and herb flavors. A quality wine, distinctive and complex, and for the price, a relative value. *Editors' Choice.* —S.H.

92 Merryvale 2007 Merlot (Oak Knoll); \$48. A dry, classy Merlot that will develop bottle complexity for a few years. There are beautiful tannins on this well-made wine; if you drink it now, decant to let it breathe, soften and allow the cherry, red currant, dried herb and oak flavors to emerge. —S.H.

92 Newton 2006 Unfiltered Merlot (Napa Valley); \$60. Soft, slightly hot and peppery in alcohol, but very dry, this Merlot shows intense flavors of cherry marmalade, blackberry essence, dark chocolate and cedar. It's a rich wine to drink with grilled steak. The tannins will balance out the meaty richness. —S.H.

90 Folkway 2007 Bien Nacido Vineyard Merlot (Santa Maria Valley); \$36. This is a pretty nice wine. It's made in a lighter style than from warmer regions, and is silky, absolutely dry and crisp in acids. The cherry, berry and currant flavors are perfectly integrated with the oak. Drink this elegantly constructed, food-friendly wine now. —S.H.

89 Broadway Vineyards 2008 Merlot (Carneros); \$35. This rich, ripe Merlot offers lots of smooth flavor. Grown on the Sonoma side of Carneros, the wine is dry and soft in tannins, marked by black cherry, blueberry, toast and vanilla flavors. —S.H.

88 Hawkstone 2008 Barney's Heritage Cuvée Merlot (Napa Valley); \$29. A fine, complex Merlot to drink now with a great steak or chop. It's dry and tannic, with polished cherry, red currant, licorice, teriyaki beef and cedar flavors. Give it a brief decant. —S.H.

87 Matanzas Creek 2007 Journey (Sonoma County); \$135. This is a tough, tannic and difficult wine to enjoy or evaluate now. It's full-bodied and dry, with good blackberry and currant flavors, and is well constructed. But it's very astringent; cellar it and see what happens. Try after 2013. —S.H.

87 Sebastiani 2007 Merlot (Sonoma County); \$17. A pretty, polished Merlot, medium bodied and dry, for drinking now. Shows cherry, blackberry and currant flavors, with a kiss of smoky oak, and feels smooth through the finish. —S.H.

86 Ancient Peaks 2008 Merlot (Paso Robles); \$16. A little sharp and light in body, but nicely dry, with complex berry, currant, tobacco and spice flavors. At this price, it's a very nice wine with some real elegance and sophistication. —S.H.

86 Elements by Artesa 2007 Elements by Artesa Merlot (Napa County/Sonoma County); \$20. An everyday

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Merlot, soft and attractive in cherry, blackberry and liqueur flavors. It's dry and sweetly tannic, a wine to enjoy now. —S.H.

86 Oak Grove 2009 Reserve Merlot (California); \$8. Dry, smooth and surprisingly rich for the price. Shows pleasantly spicy cherry, bacon and herb flavors, with a silk and satin texture. Great value in an everyday Merlot. **Best Buy.** —S.H.

85 Coastline 2008 Merlot (Paso Robles); \$10. A simple but likeable Merlot, dry and tart, with pretty good flavors of cherries, licorice and smoky oak. Nothing complicated, just an easy-drinking red wine for roasts and grilled meats. **Best Buy.** —S.H.

85 Rutherford Ranch 2008 Merlot (Napa Valley); \$18. A little rough and ready, with some uneven tannins and green fruit, but it's got a nice, dry feeling, with enough cherry and red currant flavors to satisfy. —S.H.

82 Happy Camper 2008 Merlot (California); \$9. Sharp and harsh in the mouth, with sweet and sour cherry candy flavors. —S.H.

82 Vinum 2008 Merlot (California); \$12. Smells, feels and tastes raw and harsh, a common wine partially rescued by candied berry flavors. —S.H.

PINOT NOIR

98 Goldeneye 2007 Ten Degrees Pinot Noir (Anderson Valley); \$100. This is a best barrel blend of Goldeneye's several vineyards. It takes its beautifully ripe fruit from Confluence and the tannins of The Narrows to yield a dry, densely constructed and moderately ageable wine of exceptionally high quality and appeal. Blackberries, blueberries, cherries and exotic spices characterize the flavors of this tremendous wine, one of the best of the vintage out of the Anderson Valley. Only 222 cases were produced. —S.H.

97 Goldeneye 2007 Confluence Vineyard Pinot Noir (Anderson Valley); \$75. A spectacular Pinot, continuing a string of great vintages from this little vineyard. The year 2007 gave California supernaturally rich but balanced Pinot Noirs, and this is one of them. It's

sensational, offering broad, exotic fruit flavors, pinpointed with exotic spices, and exquisitely highlighted with French oak. Truly fine, this small-production wine should age over the next 6–8 years. —S.H.

96 Goldeneye 2007 The Narrows Vineyard Pinot Noir (Anderson Valley); \$75. This is a big Pinot Noir, dark and full bodied and juicy in pomegranates, cherries, red plums and sautéed wild mushrooms, and the interplay of oak with fruit even yields richer notes of milk chocolate. It's devastatingly good, but also too young and fresh now to show its best. With its fine tannins and exquisite balance, this articulate young wine should be best after 2013. —S.H.

95 Keller Estate 2007 Precioso Pinot Noir (Sonoma Coast); \$75. A dazzlingly good Pinot Noir. Hard to exaggerate the precision of flavor and structure. Shows the massively ripe character of the vintage, with a starburst of raspberries, cherries, cola, minerals and spices, while the acidity and tannins are just about perfect. This crowd pleaser is just extraordinary now, and should develop in the bottle over the next six years. —S.H.

94 Fog Crest 2008 Estate Bottled Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); \$45. A marvelous Pinot Noir to drink now and over the next 6–7 years. It feels so rich and elaborate, with waves of raspberries, cherries, cola and oak, yet is tightly controlled by firm tannins and a great burst of citrusy acidity. Grows better and better as it warms in the glass. —S.H.

94 Freestone 2008 Quarter Moon Vineyard Pinot Noir (Sonoma Coast); \$100. This is a Pinot Noir meant to be aged. No question about it, from the citrusy acids to the sandy tannins to the somewhat awkward primary fruit flavors that desperately want to resolve with the oak. Packed with raspberries and cherries, the wine is completely dry and firm in minerals, and seems easily able to age for at least six years. Only 120 cases were produced. **Cellar Selection.** —S.H.

93 Fog Crest 2008 Laguna West Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); \$39. Here's a beautiful Pinot Noir to drink now with upscale fare, like steak, lamb chop or grilled ahi tuna. It's silky and dry and feels excellent in the mouth, with complex raspberry, cherry, cola and

smoked meat flavors, sprinkled with cocoa powder and cinnamon. Delicious. —S.H.

93 Freestone 2008 Pastorale Vineyard Pinot Noir (Sonoma Coast); \$100. Another terrific wine from this vineyard, following the superb '07. May be a bit less flamboyant, but with better structure, and equally ageable. Dry and full bodied and fairly tannic, it shows powerful cherry and raspberry fruit, smoked meat, sautéed wild mushroom and sandalwood flavors, liberally spiced. Drinkable now, and should develop through 2014, at least. —S.H.

93 Goldeneye 2007 Gowan Creek Vineyard Pinot Noir (Anderson Valley); \$75. Dark and tannic, reflecting the vineyard's location in the cooler, foggier northwest, this Pinot Noir is dramatic in depth of flavor. With its core of blackberries, cherries, blueberries, cola and rhubarb, it's tight and rigid now, suggesting 5–6 years in the cellar. —S.H.

93 Gypsy Canyon 2008 Trois Pinot Noir (Sta. Rita Hills); \$95. Big, extracted, exuberant, humongous—take your pick. Any way you describe it, this Pinot Noir is front-loaded with massive berry, cherry, orange rind, mushroom, salumi and sweet oak flavors. Yet it's controlled by a firm structure of tannins and crisp coastal acidity, and is totally dry. A great and interesting Pinot Noir that needs time. Best after 2013. **Cellar Selection.** —S.H.

93 Patz & Hall 2008 Burnside Vineyard Pinot Noir (Sonoma Coast); \$70. Anyone who doesn't love this Pinot just doesn't understand California's approach. It's a fantastically delicious wine, completely satisfying in raspberry, cherry, persimmon, toast, spice and vanilla flavors, and balanced with bright, coastal acidity. Just beautiful, and it grows better as it warms in the glass. Probably not an ager, but wonderful now and through 2013. —S.H.

93 Talisman 2007 Wildcat Mountain Vineyard Pinot Noir (Los Carneros); \$45. There's a feral quality to this wine, with its flavors of wild forest berries, red currants, cola, spicy smoked meats, tangerine zest and sandalwood, and hints of pine cones, rosemary and thyme. It's big and dry and, although silky in the mouth, tannic. An impressive young Pinot Noir that should be cellared for 5–6 years, at least. **Cellar Selection.** —S.H.

93 Talisman 2007 Gunsalus Vineyard Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); \$36. A lovely Pinot Noir, dry and silky and rich, with complex flavors of raspberries, cherries, Dr. Pepper cola, sandalwood and white pepper. Easy to drink now for its sleekness and elegance. Only 296 cases were produced but a single-vineyard wine worth seeking out. —S.H.

92 Arista 2008 Mononi Vineyard Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); \$56. Lots of zesty acidity in this Pinot Noir, giving the pomegranate, rhubarb, red cherry and licorice flavors a bright edge. The wine is very dry and complexly layered. Interesting now, if a bit primary in fruit, and balanced enough to develop additional nuances over the next six years. —S.H.

92 Kanzler 2008 Pinot Noir (Sonoma Coast); \$48. This young, impetuous Pinot Noir needs time in the cellar to calm down. It's all about fresh acidity of the citrus kind and ripe, jammy cherry and raspberry fruit, not to mention sweet, unintegrated oak. Give it a good four years. —S.H.

92 Keller Estate 2007 La Cruz Vineyard Pinot Noir (Sonoma Coast); \$44. Made in a light-bodied, lower-alcohol style, this Pinot feels silky and gentle in the mouth. It really delivers when it comes to flavor. Displays big, impressive notes of raspberries, cherries, Dr. Pepper cola, red licorice, beef jerky and smoky sandalwood that are complex and satisfying, and that finish entirely dry. Drink now and over the next four years. —S.H.

92 Mahoney 2007 Mahoney Ranch Pinot Noir (Carneros); \$32. Terrific Pinot Noir—balanced, dry and complex, showing exuberantly delicious fruit. The flavors of cherries, raspberries and mulberries are complexed with minerals and herbs, and the wine feels clean and silky. Should develop bottle nuance over the next 4–5 years. —S.H.

92 Regale Winery and Vineyards 2008 O'Neel Vineyard Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); \$48. The 2008 vintage was cool and resulted in lighter-bodied wines that also were lower in alcohol. That trend benefited wines like this lovely one from Regale. It has a transparent, silky texture, yet is very rich in cherry pie filling, bacon and Indian spices. Feels

beautiful and complex now, and should develop bottle nuance over the next six years. —S.H.

92 Taz 2008 Fiddlestix Vineyard Pinot Noir (Sta. Rita Hills); \$35. Shows a welcome return to form for this bottling, after a few off years. The wine is wonderfully dry and complex, offering nuanced flavors of cherries, raspberries and cola, as well as the spicy, smoky sandalwood of oak barrel aging. A sophisticated and elegant wine for drinking now. —S.H.

91 Foggy Bridge 2008 Bien Nacido Vineyards Pinot Noir (Santa Maria Valley); \$38. A lovely Pinot Noir, silky and dry, with crisp flavors of raspberries, cherries, Dr. Pepper cola, dusty Indian spices and smoky sandalwood. Lots of crunchy acidity gives it a citrusy bite. Now–2014. —S.H.

91 J. Lohr 2008 Fog's Reach Pinot Noir (Arroyo Seco); \$35. Shows true cool-climate varietal character in the aromas and flavors of cherries, cola, pomegranates and rhubarb pie, with complicating notes from charred oak barrels. Very good, mouthfilling and dry, with brisk acidity. Should develop in the bottle for a few years. —S.H.

91 La Fenêtre 2008 Le Bon Climat Vineyard Pinot Noir (Santa Maria Valley); \$59. La Fenetre scores with this lush, forward Pinot Noir that offers enough flavor to please almost anybody. It's enormously rich in raspberry and cherry pie filling, roasted almond granola, vanilla cream, buttered cinnamon toast and sandalwood flavors that are so delicious, they're sweet, except that the wine finishes dry. Great with lamb. Drink now. —S.H.

91 Mahoney 2007 Las Brisas Vineyard Pinot Noir (Carneros); \$32. Quite a good Pinot, dry and complex. Although it's pale in color and lightly silky in the mouth, it packs a punch, delivering waves of cherry, cranberry, spice and sandalwood flavors. One quibble is that acidity is high, which calls for rich fare to pair it with, such as Ahi tuna, beef and lamb. —S.H.

90 Arista 2008 Longbow Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); \$48. Crispness and dryness mark this elegant young Pinot Noir. It feels silky, almost delicate in the mouth, but with powerful cherry, pomegranate and cola

flavors. Should develop for up to six years in the bottle. —S.H.

90 Arista 2008 Toboni Vineyard Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); \$56. Good blackberry, cherry, cola and pomegranate flavors in this rich, dry wine, but it's also tight in tannins and brisk in acidity. Too hard and unresponsive for drinking now. Give it 4–5 years to change in the bottle. —S.H.

90 Arista 2008 Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); \$42. Although this isn't one of Arista's single-vineyard bottlings, it's right up there with them, offering rich flavors and a lovely structure. It's dry and silky, with brisk acidity backing raspberry, cherry and sandalwood flavors, and an earthy hint of balsam-splashed beefsteak tomato. Drink now–2013. —S.H.

90 Big Basin 2008 Alfaro Family Vineyard Pinot Noir (Santa Cruz Mountains); \$42. A beautiful, young and firmly tannic Pinot Noir that should improve in the bottle. It's fully dry and fine in acidity, with expressive flavors of black and red cherries, cola, beef jerky, crushed pepper and sweet, smoky sandalwood. Very nice now with a good steak, and ought to show development over the next 5–7 years. —S.H.

90 Coup de Foudre 2008 Pinot Noir (Sta. Rita Hills); \$95. There's so much oak on this Pinot Noir, you might think you were tasting a dessert made with vanilla cream and toasted meringue, like the crust on a baked Alaska. Under all that, loads of ripe raspberries and cherries. Shows the excellent hallmarks of a fine Santa Rita Pinot Noir, but certainly is one of the oakier versions. —S.H.

90 Deovlet 2008 La Encantada Vineyard Pinot Noir (Sta. Rita Hills); \$45. Very big and rich and extracted, offering massive flavors of cherries and raspberries, enriched with caramelized oak. Very delicious, if a little obvious. Pinot Noirs from this stretch of the southern Santa Rita Hills tend to age well, gaining earthy complexities over the years. This one could hang in there for a long time. —S.H.

90 Hocus Pocus 2009 Thomson Vineyard Pinot Noir (Carneros); \$24. Made in a lighter style, this Pinot comes from the cooler Napa side of the Carneros. It's light- to medium-bodied and dry, with a silky texture and

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pleasant flavors of cherries, exotic dusty spices and sandalwood. Elegant and moderate in alcohol, it's a wine to drink now. —S.H.

90 J. Lohr 2009 Falcon's Perch Pinot Noir (Monterey County); \$17. A delicious Pinot Noir to drink now with upscale fare. It's very fruity, offering a burst of raspberries and cherries, together with a coat of sweet, smoky oak. But crisp acidity and smooth, silky tannins provide a balanced structure. —S.H.

90 Longoria 2008 Fe Ciega Vineyard Pinot Noir (Sta. Rita Hills); \$48. A good Pinot Noir, dry and rich and complex, but the acidity is high. It makes for a sharp cut across the berry and cherry flavors. Seems closer to the leaner 2006 than to the wonderfully rich '07, but will probably develop in the bottle over the next 5–7 years. —S.H.

90 Old World 2006 Sterling Family Vineyard Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); \$32. An easy to drink Pinot for its dryness, exceptionally low alcohol, and cleansing acidity. It has cherry, red plum, cola and herb flavors, framed with sweet, smoky sandalwood. Decant for a while. —S.H.

90 Regale Winery and Vineyards 2008 Estate Pinot Noir (Santa Cruz Mountains); \$65. This young Pinot is rather fruity and heavy now, like the liquid version of a raspberry and cherry pie. Yet it has vibrant acidity and fine tannins, leading to the eternal question: Will it age to something more refined? My bet is yes. Give it 5–6 years. *Cellar Selection.* —S.H.

90 Talisman 2007 Hawk Hill Vineyard Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); \$46. A vigorous wine. In its youth it's bright and jammy in raspberries, cherries and currants, with fine, silky tannins and citrusy acidity, like a squeeze of lime. There's oak here, too. A bit disjointed now. Give it 3–4 years in the cellar to knit together. —S.H.

90 Wrath 2008 Quasi Nulla Pinot Noir (Monterey); \$38. This Pinot is pure California in its ripe fruitiness. It's explosive in cherry and raspberry jam flavors, with sandalwood and dusty spice notes, and also displays crisp, cool-climate acidity. A delicious wine to drink now. —S.H.

89 Arista 2008 La Cruz Vineyard Pinot Noir (Sonoma Coast); \$54. A challenging wine. It's rather strong and dry and extracted now, lacking delicacy, and makes you want to stick it in the cellar for a while. Yet there's a certain hollowness that may limit ageability. If you drink it now, give it a good decant. —S.H.

89 Bishop's Peak 2009 Pinot Noir (San Luis Obispo County); \$20. This is one of the best Pinots in a screw top you'll find. It shows elegant qualities, housing fresh, young cherry, raspberry and oak flavors in a nice, silky texture. Production was 2,328 cases. *Editors' Choice.* —S.H.

89 Fogdog 2008 Pinot Noir (Sonoma Coast); \$35. One of the richer Pinots out there, just packed with ripe raspberries and cherries, like the filling in a pie. Shows great, cool-climate acidity, and the texture is as light and silky as can be. Defines the best of a drink-now style. —S.H.

89 Kessler-Haak 2008 Clone 2A Pinot Noir (Sta. Rita Hills); \$29. Flavorful and dry, offering jammy cherries, black raspberries and oak, with an earthier hint of cola and mushrooms. It's a silky, medium-bodied wine that could develop bottle complexity with 5 or 6 years of age. —S.H.

89 La Fenêtre 2008 Los Alamos Vineyard Pinot Noir (Santa Barbara County); \$39. This enormously rich, extracted Pinot Noir will please flavor-forward fans. It's explosive in raspberries, cherries, cola, figs, bacon, orange zest and other umami tastes, wrapped into a silky texture and brightened with crisp acidity. Seems best now and for a year or two. —S.H.

89 Valerie's Vineyard 2008 One Acre Pinot Noir (Carneros); \$40. Lots of juicy flavor in this dry, jammy wine. It's strong in raspberries, cherries and sweet, smoky sandalwood, with lovely Carneros acidity. Best now and for a few years for freshness and vivacity. —S.H.

88 Arista 2008 Pinot Noir (Sonoma Coast); \$32. With rich, spicy raspberry, cherry, tangerine zest and sweet cola flavors, wrapped into a silky texture, this is a pretty, polished Pinot to drink now. Zesty acidity makes for a mouthwatering crispness. Good with ahi tuna tartare. —S.H.

88 Dolina 2009 Huber Vineyard Pinot Noir (Sta. Rita Hills); \$28. Drink now for its easy to like, pie filling cherries and raspberries. The mouthfeel is pure silk and satin, and the tannins are rich and intricate. —S.H.

88 Expression 39 2007 Pinot Noir (Anderson Valley); \$30. This is a big, extracted wine, but it shows enough sophistication to warrant a place on a fine table. With ripe cherry, raspberry, red licorice and beef jerky flavors, it has good acidity for balance, and the finish is dry and spicy. —S.H.

88 Morgan 2008 Double L Pinot Noir (Santa Lucia Highlands); \$48. Big, rich and heavy as usual, a full-bodied Pinot Noir with thick tannins and jammy cherry, berry, currant and oak flavors. Rather clumsy now, this heroic Pinot Noir might do interesting things over the years. —S.H.

87 Athair 2008 Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); \$36. This is a good Pinot Noir for drinking now. It has uncomplicated flavors of cherries, red plums and spices, and is dry and silky in the mouth. Acidity is high, giving it a tart bite throughout. —S.H.

87 Big Basin 2008 Woodruff Family Vineyard Pinot Noir (Santa Cruz Mountains); \$48. A good, dry mountain Pinot. It's a little tough, with some uneven tannins and a bite of acidity, but rich in cherry, raspberry, cola and sandalwood flavors. Might improve a little after 2 or 3 years in the bottle. —S.H.

87 Expression 39 2007 Annahala Vineyard Pinot Noir (Anderson Valley); \$50. Forward and candied in raspberries and cherries, this is a tasty wine, dry and crisp in acidity, but it's a bit direct and one-dimensional right now. Depends for its appeal on sheer, ripe fruitiness. With these wines, you never know where they'll go. —S.H.

87 Lafond 2007 Lafond Vineyard Pommard Clone Pinot Noir (Sta. Rita Hills); \$50. Good and intricate, but too oaky. Wood barrels dominate, with buttered cinnamon toast and caramelized vanilla cream dominating the cherries and raspberries. Even under that assault, the fine acidity and minerality of the terroir shines through. Drink now. —S.H.

87 Mahoney 2007 Pinot Noir (Carneros); \$13. Not one to age, but to enjoy now for its fresh, clean fruitiness. It's dry, silky and pure in raspberries, cherries and Dr. Pepper cola, with a rich overlay of oak. At this price, it's a steal. —S.H.

87 Patz & Hall 2008 Jenkins Ranch Pinot Noir (Sonoma Coast); \$45. Rather strong and direct now, with jammy raspberry and cherry flavors. Although the wine is dry, it tastes sweet in caramelly oak and fruity extract as well as glycerine. It's a rich, flashy wine, but lacks some subtlety. —S.H.

87 Q 2009 Discovery Pinot Noir (Edna Valley); \$11. Racy and dry, this delicious Pinot Noir offers very pleasant flavors of cherries, currants and cola. It feels silky in the mouth, with zesty acidity for balance. A great value, but case production was only 1,000. **Best Buy.** —S.H.

87 Regale Winery and Vineyards 2008 Pinot Noir (Sonoma Coast); \$50. Dark in color, soft in structure and rather heavy, this is a good Pinot Noir that doesn't quite rise beyond a drink-me-now polish. It has jammy flavors of cherries, blackberries and mocha. Drink now. —S.H.

86 Beauregard 2008 Bald Mountain Vineyard Pinot Noir (Ben Lomond Mountain); \$50. A tough, gritty wine, with lots of stinging acidity and jammy cherry and raspberry flavors. Nice and dry and silky, but a bit unbalanced. —S.H.

86 Estancia 2009 Pinnacles Ranches Pinot Noir (Monterey County); \$16. Pretty good price for a sound Pinot Noir. It's dry and silky, with flavors of cherries, herbs and spices. Decant before pouring. —S.H.

86 Lincourt 2008 Pinot Noir (Sta. Rita Hills); \$35. A little rough around the edges, with some irregular tannins and a few green notes, but otherwise fine and dry. The silky texture frames Life Saver cherry candy flavors. —S.H.

86 Mossback 2008 Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); \$25. Oak dominates this wine, in the form of vanilla, caramel and buttered toast. Under that are simple but

tasty flavors of cherries and raspberries. It's a silky, creamy Pinot Noir for drinking now. —S.H.

86 Taz 2008 Cuyama River Pinot Noir (Santa Maria Valley); \$28. A little heavy and overripe. There's a taste of prunes and chocolate in addition to the more classic cherries. Nicely dry and complex, but lacks vibrancy. Drink now. —S.H.

85 Beauregard 2008 Estate Grown Pinot Noir (Santa Cruz Mountains); \$35. Tastes overwrought, with too much evident oak and too much extraction. The combination makes for a jammy, sweet wine that's slightly heavy. —S.H.

85 Boekenooogen 2008 Pinot Noir (Santa Lucia Highlands); \$34. Rather acidic now, giving a sweet and sour taste to the cherry, raspberry and oak flavors. On the plus side is dryness and silkiness. —S.H.

85 Davis Bynum 2008 Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); \$35. A bit too oaky and extracted. Trades these winemaker elaborations for the natural subtlety of the grapes. Rich in cherries and raspberries, but heavy-handed. Drink now. —S.H.

85 Eagles Landing 2007 Pinot Noir (Edna Valley); \$38. A standard issue Pinot Noir. It's dry and silky, showing decent cherry and cola flavors and quite a bit of tart acidity. Ready to drink now. —S.H.

85 Lafond 2008 SRH Pinot Noir (Sta. Rita Hills); \$27. Heavy, soft and oaky. Gains points for richness of flavor, offering waves of cherries and raspberries, but it's top heavy in fruit, and the oak is too strong. —S.H.

85 Verve 2007 Pinot Noir (Sonoma Coast); \$28. A heavy, dense Pinot that, despite considerable cherry, raspberry, strawberry and pomegranate fruit richness, feels a bit inert on the palate. Drink now. —S.H.

85 Verve 2007 Pinot Noir (Carneros); \$24. Light and thin in texture as well as flavor. Nice and dry, with pleasant strawberry and cranberry fruit and a touch of sweet oak. However, it lacks substance and complexity for the price. Drink now. —S.H.

84 Gnarly Head 2009 Pinot Noir (California); \$11. This rustic Pinot Noir gets the job done with a nice, silky texture and a good bite of acidity to accompany the Pinot-like cherry flavors. Drink now. —S.H.

84 Vinum 2008 Pinot Noir (California); \$12. Here's a sound, everyday Pinot Noir. It's a little raw and jammy, with pleasant cherry, leather and cola flavors and a hint of oak. —S.H.

83 Verve 2007 Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); \$33. Overripe and pruny, with jammy blackberry and molasses flavors. Too heavy and sharp for balance. —S.H.

82 Fog Head 2008 Hillside Reserve Pinot Noir (Monterey County); \$25. Tastes as sweet and simple as a raspberry and cherry cola drink, with crisp acidity and a sugary finish. —S.H.

SYRAH/SHIRAZ

94 Arkenstone 2007 Syrah (Howell Mountain); \$70. This is a huge, velvety, dramatic Syrah. With stunning tannins and depth of fruit, it represents the best of Howell Mountain red from a great vintage. Bone dry, it floods the mouth with intense blackberry, black currant, black cherry, smoked meat, licorice, mocha and peppery spice flavors that are deep and long. Really great now, and should develop in the bottle over the next six years. —S.H.

92 Austin Hope 2009 Hope Family Vineyard Syrah (Paso Robles); \$42. This is a delicious wine. The blackberry and cherry jam, chocolate, anise and pepper flavors have a pie filling richness, complete with the smoky-sweet pastry crust. Yet it's totally dry. Feels fine and distinguished, if a little hot in alcohol. Drink now–2012. —S.H.

92 La Fenêtre 2008 Alisos Vineyard Syrah (Santa Barbara County); \$36. Tastes young and drily tannic now, with an enormous core of blackberries and black cherries. A complex wine to take note of. If you drink it now, decant. Otherwise, give it 3–4 years to do its thing. —S.H.

92 Michael James Wines 2008 White Hawk Vineyard Syrah (Santa Bar-

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bara County); \$38. The vineyard is one of the best sources of Syrah in the Central Coast, and Michael James' bottling expresses its balance and complexity. The wine is full bodied and softly tannic, with dry, spicy flavors of cherries, blueberries, currants and cedar. A beautiful wine to drink now. —S.H.

92 Piedrasassi 2007 Rim Rock Syrah (California); \$46. Made in a jammy, soft but enormously rich style, this Syrah is almost like Port, except that it's dry. You'll want to sip it slowly, over time, to let it shape-shift in the glass. It offers waves of cherry pie filling, blackberry marmalade and cassis flavors, touched with sweetly smoked oak. Calls for very rich and elaborate beef and lamb dishes. —S.H.

92 Zaca Mesa 2007 Mesa Reserve Syrah (Santa Ynez Valley); \$42. Young and vigorous now, marked by tannins and dryness that mask the fruit, making the wine somewhat aloof. However, the fruit is huge. It's ripe and succulent in blackberries and black cherries, and you'll find additional notes of smoked meat and black pepper for complexity. A wonderful Syrah that needs 3–5 years to blossom. **Cellar Selection.** —S.H.

91 Bella Victorian Vineyard 2007 The Garage Syrah (California); \$40. The grapes come from Ventura County, which lies between Santa Barbara and Los Angeles along the coast. This is cool-climate territory, and it shows in the rich acidity and delicate structure that accompany this delicious wine. It's potent in blackberry and black cherry fruit, with a spicy finish. —S.H.

91 Klinker Brick Winery 2008 Farrah Syrah Syrah (Lodi); \$20. From a producer to watch in underrated Lodi, this intense, black cherry, bacon-fat and white peppery Syrah has an almost peat-like, whisky aroma at first, very inviting, which then leads into more bacon and pepper that carries through on the palate, balanced by extremely smooth tannins and an unexpected elegance. A really cool Syrah to try on its own that'll go very nicely with meaty, winery foods. —V.B.

91 Piedrasassi 2007 Mr. Smith Syrah (California); \$56. California Syrah doesn't get much richer than this. It explodes in blackberry and cherry jam, olive tapenade, dark chocolate and bacon flavors, wrapped into firm,

intricate tannins. Lacks some vital acidity for balance, and so it doesn't seem ageable, but a fancy wine for drinking now. —S.H.

91 Piedrasassi 2003 Syrah (California); \$36. Released at seven years of age, this Syrah is soft, tannic and dry. It has rich flavors of blackberries and blueberries, and seems far younger than it is. It's interesting and complex, and grows in the glass. Could go for a few more years. —S.H.

90 Broadway Vineyards 2008 Syrah (Carneros); \$35. This rich Syrah is a pleasure to drink with lamb and beef dishes. It has an excellent structure, softly tannic and silky in the mouth, with long, luscious black cherry, blueberry, beef teriyaki, sandalwood and spice flavors. Only 100 cases were produced. —S.H.

90 Stolpman 2008 Originals Syrah (Santa Ynez Valley); \$38. A rich, extracted Syrah that treads the line between simple lusciousness and complex authority. It's softly tannic and low in acidity, with pie filling flavors of cherries, raspberries and mocha. Earns extra points for sheer richness. Drink now. —S.H.

90 Stolpman 2008 Ruben's Block Syrah (Santa Ynez Valley); \$98. Extraordinarily rich, offering massive blackberry and cherry jam, red currant, licorice, balsam, bitter chocolate and red pepper flavors. It's very tannic, but seems overly soft, and probably best now, so drink up. —S.H.

89 Page Mill Winery 2007 Tazetta Vineyard Syrah (Livermore Valley); \$24. Dark purple red with a great fruity nose full of blackberry, tart cherry and dark plum, this tiny-production out of Livermore Valley is medium bodied with deep concentration and a nice finish cradled in cardamom and earthy bacon. —V.B.

88 Big Basin 2007 Rattlesnake Rock Vineyard Syrah (Santa Cruz Mountains); \$54. Nice and ripely sweet in fresh blackberry, cherry and oak flavors, this Syrah is made for drinking now. It's dry and rich in tannins, with a soft, velvety mouthfeel. Shows interesting complications of smoked meats, pepper, cola and minerals. —S.H.

88 Hocus Pocus 2008 Syrah (Santa Barbara County); \$19. A little rugged

in tannins, but nicely dry and crisp in acidity, with rich, forward cherry, boysenberry, cranberry and cola flavors, accented with a hint of toasty oak. An easy, elegant wine to drink now. —S.H.

88 Keller Estate 2007 La Cruz Vineyard Syrah (Sonoma Coast); \$40. Very dry and pretty tannic, this cool-climate Syrah combines its blackberry and cherry fruit with less ripe notes of herbs and even a touch of asparagus. Intense umami flavors of salty, smoky bacon give it richness. Drink now. —S.H.

88 Stolpman 2008 Estate Syrah (Santa Ynez Valley); \$34. This is an interesting wine for drinking now as an alternative to a dry, full-bodied red, such as Merlot or Cabernet. It's spicy and ripe in red currant, licorice, smoked meat, violet and sandalwood flavors that are rich and complex. —S.H.

87 Arkenstone 2006 Syrah (Howell Mountain); \$70. Wonderfully smooth in the mouth, all satin and velvet, and so dry and crisp, it makes your mouth water. Good flavors, too, suggesting freshly picked wild blackberries, anise and black pepper. There's just a trace of some unripe fruit, however, that turns vegetal. Drink now. —S.H.

87 Boekenooogen 2008 Syrah (Santa Lucia Highlands); \$36. This is a dry, acidic, tannic and earthy Syrah. It has impressively deep flavors of black and red cherries, bacon and sandalwood, and gets better as it breathes in the glass. Not an ager, but give it a few hours in a nice decanter. —S.H.

87 Harrison Clarke 2007 Cuvée Charlotte Syrah (Santa Ynez Valley); \$52. Superfruity and jammy, with massive raspberry, cherry, blackberry and dark chocolate flavors, accented with black pepper. The texture is soft and voluptuous. This Syrah is a bit direct now, with its primary fruit and oak overlay, and it's a little hot, with an official alcohol reading of 15.5%. —S.H.

87 Jaffurs 2009 Syrah (Santa Barbara County); \$27. A good everyday Syrah. It doesn't show the richness of the single-vineyard bottlings, but it's nice and dry, with berry, cherry, grilled meat, pepper and oak flavors. —S.H.

87 Mahoney 2007 Syrah (Carneros); \$18. This is soft, full-bodied and richly

tannic, with blackberry jam, beef jerky and spice flavors. A little sweet and direct, but a nice wine to drink with steak, chops, grilled chicken, even Mexican food. —S.H.

87 Sobon Estate 2008 Syrah (Amador County); \$14. Sobon's Syrah is from one of the winery's oldest plantings, one that is organically farmed and lightly cropped. The resulting wine, which includes small percentages of Zinfandel (6%), the winery's specialty, as well as Petite Sirah (2%) and Grenache (2%), is more on the savory meat and cooked plums end of the Syrah spectrum, with a silky texture. The wine falls a tad flat on the finish. —V.B.

87 Stolpman 2008 Hilltops Syrah (Santa Ynez Valley); \$48. Lots of people will like this wine, but it is a little hot in high alcohol and excessively soft. The jammy blackberry and cherry have a baked, raisiny edge. Definitely made in a warm, ripe California style. Drink now. —S.H.

86 Big Basin 2008 Homestead Syrah (Monterey - Santa Cruz); \$33. A good, dry and flavorful Syrah, with lush blackberry, cherry and oak flavors. It's a harsh in the mouth, with some firm tannins, but a nice, fruity sipper to enjoy now. —S.H.

86 Tin Barn 2006 Coryelle Fields Vineyard Syrah (Sonoma Coast); \$25. Lots of oak on this five-year-old Syrah. Too much, in fact, although it may be that the cherry-berry fruit is simply dropping out. Either way, it's a fairly simple wine, dry and tart and spicy. Drink now. —S.H.

86 Zaca Mesa 2007 Syrah (Santa Ynez Valley); \$24. A bit more rugged and rustic than Zaca Mesa's more expensive '07 Syrahs, and also somewhat less ripe. But it's a dry, rich and smoothly textured wine, good for drinking now. —S.H.

85 Big Basin 2007 Coastview Vineyard Syrah (Monterey); \$48. There's a vegetal note that drags on the otherwise rich blackberry, roasted meat and pepper flavors. It's also quite soft, lacking some vibrancy. A sound, rustic wine for drinking now. —S.H.

85 Lafond 2008 SRH Syrah (Sta. Rita Hills); \$23. Too acidic for real enjoyment, with a bite of citrusy sharpness, as if a few

squirts of lime juice were added. Otherwise, it's bone dry and tannic, with blackberry and pepper flavors. —S.H.

85 Santa Barbara Winery 2008 Syrah (Santa Ynez Valley); \$20. A problematic wine marked by excessive acidity that makes it tart, almost sour, despite some good blackberry and cherry flavors. The tannins are soft, making the acidity taste unnatural. —S.H.

84 Big Basin 2007 Mandala Syrah (Santa Cruz Mountains); \$39. A little unripe, with a vegetal, asparagus aroma that's off-putting. Tastes better than it smells, turning smoothly dry and rich in tannins, with satisfying blackberry and beef teriyaki flavors. But the unripeness shows up again in the finish. —S.H.

84 Big Basin 2008 Mandala Syrah (California); \$45. This is a heavy, soft and one-dimensional Syrah. It's all right for everyday drinking, with pleasant blackberry, cherry, bacon and spice flavors. —S.H.

84 Oak Grove 2009 Reserve Shiraz (California); \$8. Pale in color, thin in flavor, with herb, pepper, tobacco and sour black cherry candy flavors. But it's a pretty good party wine for the price. —S.H.

83 Big Basin 2008 Fairview Road Ranch Syrah (Santa Lucia Highlands); \$39. Sound and dry, but heavy and dull, and not quite ripe. There's a vegetal component to the blackberries and oak. —S.H.

GRENACHE

92 Austin Hope 2009 Hope Family Vineyard Grenache (Paso Robles); \$42. The Hope winery has produced one of the best Grenaches of the vintage. Avoids the common pitfalls of this tricky variety to give a bone dry, softly tannic wine that's rich in black cherry, prosciutto and black pepper flavors. The texture is so silky, you could substitute this for Pinot Noir. —S.H.

89 Standing Sun 2009 Camp Four Vineyard Grenache (Santa Barbara County); \$28. A good Grenache from the standpoint of a dry red wine. The wine is extraordinarily rich in cherry fruit, and is nicely silky,

with firm, juicy acidity. Neutral oak adds just a touch of smoke. Drink now. —S.H.

88 Bella Victorian Vineyard 2006 Romeo Grenache (Santa Barbara County); \$39. This is a pleasant, easy-drinking Grenache to enjoy now with a nice steak or lamb chop. It's dry and silky, with the weight of Pinot Noir, and flavors of cherries, red currants, cola, sweet tobacco, leather and spices. —S.H.

88 Sans Liege 2008 Pickpocket Grenache (Paso Robles); \$36. Made in that very ripe, high-alcohol Paso style, with dense, concentrated fruit and a lot of upfront flash and flamboyance. Reminiscent of Saxum's wines, it's rich, unctuous and almost a food group of its own, with jammy flavors of cherries and raspberries and their associated liqueurs. —S.H.

85 Stolpman 2008 Estate Grenache (Santa Ynez Valley); \$34. Too hot, with 15.6% alcohol, and it shows in the chile pepper heat. Also too soft, lacking structure. With the glycerine, it tastes like a sweet Starbucks drink with raspberry, mocha, vanilla and cinnamon flavors. —S.H.

PETITE SIRAH

87 Spellbound 2008 Petite Sirah (California); \$15. Tastes almost like an Aussie Shiraz, a big, jammy but drily acidic wine that explodes in blackberry, cherry and pepper flavors. Robust and fun, a great wine to serve with barbecue or rich meat stews. —S.H.

85 Vinum 2008 Petite Sirah (California); \$12. Here's a soft, sweet, jammy wine to drink with barbecue and rich meat stews. It's rich in tannins, with somewhat sweet blackberry, cherry, mocha and spice flavors. —S.H.

84 Oak Grove 2009 Reserve Petite Sirah (California); \$8. Pretty good for the price. It's dry, tannic and tart, with flavors of chocolate-covered raisins, blackberry Lifesaver candy and toast. Production was 5,000 cases. **Best Buy.** —S.H.

SANGIOVESE

88 Stolpman 2009 La Coppa Sangiovese (Santa Ynez Valley); \$22.

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One of the better California Sangioveses out there. It has a delicately silky texture and is very dry, with the acidity the variety always packs behind the cherry flavors. A lovely wine whose tannins will play well with a grilled steak. —S.H.

88 Stolpman 2007 Estate Sangiovese (Santa Ynez Valley); \$36. At more than three years of age, this Sangiovese is still fresh and vibrant in jammy cherry and black raspberry fruit. It's dry and brisk in acidity. It's a good wine, if a little simple, and will pair well with most beef dishes, especially prepared with mushrooms. —S.H.

84 Bacio Divino 2007 Pazzo Sangiovese (Napa Valley); \$21. Sharp, zingy acidity marks this dry red wine. It's medium-bodied and silky, like a Pinot Noir, with rich cherry and oak flavors. Drink now. —S.H.

ZINFANDEL

91 Carol Shelton 2006 Bacchus Laureate Reserve Zinfandel (Dry Creek Valley); \$52. With massive fruit and power, this low production (300 case) Zinfandel will make lovers of the Shelton style exult, while others might find it lacking elegance. But there's no doubting the potency of the wild berry, licorice, cola, cedar and spice flavors, which earn this wine its high score. —S.H.

91 Carol Shelton 2007 Karma Zin Rue Vineyard Old Vine Zinfandel (Russian River Valley); \$33. Lusty, full-bodied, powerful, classic Sonoma Zinfandel. Swamps the palate with complex flavors of wild forest berries, red currants, licorice, beef jerky, cola, dusty Indian spice and cedar flavors, wrapped into firm tannins. Really textbook Zin, dry, lively and distinctive. Drink now-2013. —S.H.

90 Del Carlo Winery 2007 Old Vine Zinfandel (Dry Creek Valley); \$32. A rich, complex Zinfandel, showing the rustic mouthfeel sometimes found in Dry Creek reds. The tannins are strong and jagged, and the berry and cherry flavors have a wild, briary taste. But the finish is bone dry, and the wine grows more interesting as it breathes in the glass. —S.H.

89 Carol Shelton 2007 Rocky Reserve Florence Vineyard Zinfandel (Rockpile); \$33. Marked by dryness and some

heat from alcohol, this wine also has a rich core of ripe cherries. It's very strong and powerful, not a Zinfandel that's shy or apologizes for its brashness. But that's the essence of Rockpile. Drink this sturdy wine now, and the ideal food pairing is barbecue. —S.H.

88 Joel Gott 2008 Zinfandel (California); \$17. A great Zinfandel for the price. It's dry and elegant, with a mouthfeel somewhere between Pinot Noir and Merlot. Really balanced, with soft tannins and acids framing oak-tinged berry and spice flavors. With 30,000 cases produced, it should be easy to find. *Editors' Choice.* —S.H.

88 Old World 2005 Laughlin Vineyard Zinfandel (Russian River Valley); \$28. Starting to lose its fruit and show a rich, dried berry and chocolate note. But the high alcohol is coming through. Feels soft and generous, with Porty flavors of black currants that finish a little sweet. Good with short ribs, beef stews and barbecue. —S.H.

87 Peachy Canyon 2008 Westside Zinfandel (Paso Robles); \$19. Tastes like there's some residual sugar in this sweet Zin. It's almost a dessert wine, like a raspberry and cherry pie, with a sweet berry liqueur finish. The alcohol is 15.2%. —S.H.

87 Peachy Canyon 2008 The Vortex Zinfandel (Paso Robles); \$36. Fruity and soft, this Zinfandel has flavors of raspberry and cherry pie filling, raspberry liqueur, chocolate and spices. It's very high in alcohol, and hot, with a Porty sweetness. —S.H.

87 Peachy Canyon 2008 Especial Zinfandel (Paso Robles); \$40. Made in a high-alcohol, extracted style, this Zin has wild berry, chocolate, licorice and liqueur flavors that veer into currants and raisins. It's hot, peppery, glyceriney sweet and technically dry. —S.H.

87 Peachy Canyon 2008 Mustang Springs Zinfandel (Paso Robles); \$36. A bit hot in high alcohol, with a chili pepper bite behind the enormously ripe raspberry and cherry jam, chocolate, beef jerky and pepper spice flavors. Drink now. —S.H.

87 Valley of the Moon 2008 Zinfandel (Sonoma County); \$16. This is a sound, pleasurable Zin to drink now. It's dry and

spicy, with flavors of fresh, briary blackberries and cherries, and a long aftertaste. —S.H.

86 Giarusso 2008 Estate Bottled Zinfandel (Dry Creek Valley); \$20. A bit too strong in Porty, sugary raisins, but not too much, so unless you're sensitive to this, it is a pretty nice Zin. Shows plenty of spicy Dry Creek character. —S.H.

86 Peter Franus 2008 Brandlin Vineyard Zinfandel (Mount Veeder); \$35. Shows a mountain toughness of tannins with unevenly ripened fruit that gives the wine a sweet and sour taste. Intense blackberries and cherries coexist with greener flavors of mint, along with heat from high alcohol. Drink now. —S.H.

86 Sebastiani 2007 Zinfandel (Sonoma County); \$15. A fairly standard Zin that plays it right down the middle. It's dry, clean and spicy, with wild berry and tobacco flavors wrapped into smooth tannins. Drink now. —S.H.

86 Sebastiani 2008 Zinfandel (Dry Creek Valley); \$24. Lots to like about this Zin. It's dry, smooth in tannins and fine in acidity, and shows the briary, brambly, wild berry notes of its origin. It's a little thin in flavor and depth, especially at this price. Still, it's a very nice Zinfandel. —S.H.

86 Tin Barn 2008 Gilsson Vineyard Zinfandel (Russian River Valley); \$27. Oak gives this wine a caramel-like richness, while the underlying fruit is jammy and spicy in cherries and raspberries. The result is a somewhat candied Zin. Drink it now. —S.H.

85 Mueller 2007 Old Vine Zinfandel (Russian River Valley); \$29. A robust, muscular Zinfandel with bigtime jammy blackberries, cherries and raspberries that have a freshly picked briary taste, and plenty of brisk, fruity acidity. Good for drinking now. —S.H.

85 Plungerhead 2008 Old Vine Zinfandel (Dry Creek Valley); \$20. This is a dry, hot, rustic Zinfandel, with a burn of alcohol. But it's rich in cherry and berry, currant, licorice, smoked meat and pepper spice flavors. Has lots of popular appeal. —S.H.

85 Rodney Strong 2008 Knotty Vines Zinfandel (Northern Sonoma); \$19. Dry and earthy, with somewhat thin blackberry, currant, raisin, tobacco and black pepper flavors. A sound everyday Zin. —S.H.

84 Peachy Canyon 2008 Incredible Red Zinfandel (Paso Robles); \$12. Tastes overtly sweet and simple, like a raspberry and cherry honey granola bar, with roasted almonds and spices. Production was 31,000 cases. —S.H.

84 Tamás Estates 2008 Zinfandel (Central Coast); \$10. Lots of zippy acidity in this dry, jammy Zin. It may be too sharp for some people, despite the cherry fruit, beef jerky and spice flavors. —S.H.

82 Glen Ellen 2008 Proprietor's Reserve Old Vine Zinfandel (California); \$10. Thin and vegetal, with sweet and sour berry flavors. But it's dry and clean. This would suffice for a big party. —S.H.

OTHER RED WINES

92 Peter Franus 2007 Red Wine (Red Hills Lake County); \$28. With delicious texture and concentration, this Lake County blend of Grenache, Syrah and Mourvèdre from the 3,000-foot-high Fore Family Vineyard is intensely good, a deep reddish-purple blueberry-tinged infusion of earth and clove spice with dry, tight tannins and even a little lavender that'll linger. This one'll age, but is so convincingly reminiscent of the Northern Rhône right now, it'll be hard to wait. —V.B.

91 Sans Liege 2008 The Offering (Santa Barbara County); \$25. This is a Grenache, Syrah and Mourvèdre blend, with a trace of Viognier. It's a big, rich, voluptuous wine, dynamic in berries and vanilla cream from oak, and the acidity must come from that 2% of Viognier. So fruity, it's almost sweet, except that it finishes with a dry flourish. Only 960 cases were produced. *Editors' Choice.* —S.H.

90 Stolpman 2008 La Croce (Santa Ynez Valley); \$66. A rich, dramatic and impressive wine. With vital acidity and dryness, it has complex layers of ripe cherries, red licorice, cranberries, pomegranates, mocha and cinnamon. Falls somewhere in texture between

Pinot Noir and Merlot, either of which it can substitute for. Drink now. —S.H.

89 Ahlgren 2005 Bates' Ranch Cabernet Franc (Santa Cruz Mountains); \$28. This Cab Franc is considerably lighter in body than a Cabernet Sauvignon. Its silky texture frames red cherry, red currant, red licorice, cola and sandalwood flavors that finish very dry. It's a lovely wine of some charm, but give it a decant before serving. —S.H.

89 Dragonette 2007 MJM (California); \$50. You might want to lay this Syrah-based Rhône wine down for a year or two. Tasted in the early fall of 2010, it's sharp and fresh-fruity, which gives the cherry, raspberry and cocoa a jammy taste. The grapes come from Paso Robles and Santa Barbara County. —S.H.

88 Alexander Valley Vineyards 2007 Wetzel Family Estate Cabernet Franc (Alexander Valley); \$21. The alcohol is nice and modest on this dry wine, and it has a pleasantly soft feeling as you sip it. Then there are the cherry and herb flavors that are complex and appealing. It's a lovely wine to drink now. —S.H.

88 Conn Creek 2008 Herrick Red (Napa Valley); \$18. Lots of pleasure in this dry, classically structured wine. It's rich and forward in juicy blackberries and cherries, with a milk chocolate richness but also a dried herb earthiness that grounds it. Good price for a wine of this class. *Editors' Choice.* —S.H.

88 Mahoney 2007 Las Brisas Vineyard Montepulciano (Carneros); \$24. This dry, fairly acidic wine has a full-bodied texture and strong flavors of wild berries and cherries, tobacco, dark chocolate and spices. It's an interesting, complex wine to try as a switch from Merlot or even a spicy Zinfandel. —S.H.

88 Old World 2005 Dei Du Rocchi Ranch Fog Line (Sonoma Coast); \$25. This Cabernet-Syrah blend is made in a lighter, more acidic and earthier style than most red wines these days. With only 13.9% alcohol, it shows crisp flavors of dried cherries, tobacco, black pepper and sandalwood. Needs a good decant. —S.H.

88 Standing Sun 2009 GSM (Santa Barbara County); \$28. Here's a dry, crisp southern Rhône blend with plenty of ripe

fruit and a long, spicy finish. Made from Grenache, Syrah and Mourvèdre, it shows cherries and blackberries, with hints of violets and spices, brightened with zesty acidity. —S.H.

87 3CV 2009 BANK (Happy Canyon of Santa Barbara); \$24. Dry, tannic and jammy, this Bordeaux blend contains a splash of Syrah. It's strong and flavorful in blackberries, cherries and raspberries, with a rich coating of sweet, smoky oak. —S.H.

87 Jax 2008 Taureau Y3 (Napa Valley); \$20. This blend is a nice wine to drink now. It's soft and fruity, with delicious black cherry, mocha, vanilla, anise and cinnamon spice flavors. —S.H.

87 Standing Sun 2008 Syrah-Grenache (Santa Barbara County); \$28. Lots of acidity in this dry Rhône blend—maybe too much. It has the cut of a raw lemon. But the cherry, raspberry and cola flavors are very rich. —S.H.

85 Cerro Prieto 2007 Paso Bordo Cabernet Sauvignon-Syrah (Paso Robles); \$39. Soft and Port-like, with raisiny blackberry and chocolate flavors. Could even have some residual sugar. The alcohol level is 15.7%, and you can feel heat in the finish. Drink now with tri-tip beef. —S.H.

85 Liberty School 2008 Cuvée (Central Coast); \$12. A smooth, crisp Syrah-based Rhône blend, and a good value in a dry, full-bodied red wine. It has strong flavors of berries and cherries that veer into raisins, but not too much. —S.H.

85 Sebastiani 2007 Barbera (Sonoma Valley); \$26. A tough, gritty wine, with hard tannins and acidity framing blackberry and black currant flavors. It's fully dry, but has the rustic feeling that Barbera usually shows. —S.H.

84 Hahn 2009 G-S-M (Central Coast); \$12. Soft and gritty around the edges, with strong flavors of raspberry and cherry jam. It even tastes a little sugary, although it's probably technically dry. —S.H.

84 Elements by Artesa 2007 Red Wine (Napa County / Sonoma County); \$20. This is a good, somewhat rustic

wine to drink now. It's full bodied and dry, with cherry-berry, tobacco and spice flavors. —S.H.

CALIFORNIA WHITE WINES

CHARDONNAY

95 Keller Estate 2007 Precioso Chardonnay (Sonoma Coast); \$75.

An extraordinary Chardonnay whose complicated richness is balanced with tight acidity and a firm grounding of stony minerals. Brings to mind a great Chablis, with its zesty tang followed by elaborate layers of tropical fruits and pears. Utterly delicious, wildly appealing, a wine that will develop bottle interest over the next six years. Only 97 cases were produced. —S.H.

95 Two Sisters 2008 Courtney's Vineyard Chardonnay (Sta. Rita Hills); \$55.

Chardonnay doesn't get much riper or richer than this. Dazzles with pear jam, pineapple custard, crème brûlée, buttered toast and cinnamon spice flavors, and a firm grounding of minerals. Calls for the richest possible foods, like lobster. Drink now. —S.H.

93 Foley 2008 T Anchor Ranch Chardonnay (Sta. Rita Hills); \$45.

A brilliant Chardonnay showing how well this region can ripen fruit while retaining brisk acidity. Oak barrels add an exotic touch of clove to the underlying pineapple fruit flavors. Feels rich and creamy, and aging on the lees provides a complex touch of sourdough. Drink now. —S.H.

93 Foley 2008 Rancho Santa Rosa Chardonnay (Sta. Rita Hills); \$40.

A beautiful Chardonnay, notable for its elegant structure. Perfect acidity and just a hint of tannins, much of it from oak barrels, provide the framework for the pineapple and kiwi fruit flavors, enriched with notes of cream and buttered toast. —S.H.

93 Freestone 2008 Pastorale Vineyard Chardonnay (Sonoma Coast); \$100.

The best thing about this Chardonnay is the acidity. It's brisk and clean, and gives a zesty finish to the extraordinarily rich pineapple, papaya, lime and Meyer lemon flavors that are almost sweet, but aren't. A firm scour of minerals

adds the necessary grounding to this complex wine. Drink now–2013, but not too cold. —S.H.

93 Keller Estate 2007 La Cruz Vineyard Chardonnay (Sonoma Coast); \$36.

A few years in the bottle are beginning to age this charming Chardonnay, although its brisk acidity and minerality remain. The pear, guava, nectarine and tangerine flavors are just starting to pick up a dried fruit character. Complex and savory, it's a very fine wine to drink now. —S.H.

93 Merryvale 2008 Silhouette Chardonnay (Napa Valley); \$55.

Silhouette is Merryvale's small-production best of barrels blend from the winery's various vineyards. The '08 is a success, showing brisk acidity and new oak and yeast flavors and a creamy texture framing ripe pineapple, pear and mineral flavors. It's an elegant wine that shouldn't be served too cold. —S.H.

92 Capture 2009 Ma Vie Carol Chardonnay (Alexander Valley); \$42.

The best Alexander Valley Chardonnays, such as this, show flamboyant tropical flavors. Capture's '09 shows ripe, extravagant pineapple, mango, papaya, nectarine and lime fruit, with a grilled quality baked into a pastry dessert. It's a big wine framed by fine acidity. The oak appliqué is just about perfect. —S.H.

92 Clos Pegase 2007 Hommage Mitsuko's Vineyard Chardonnay (Carneros); \$40.

A rich Chardonnay made in the popular style. It's almost sweet in pineapple jam, crème brûlée, buttered toast, honey and cinnamon spice flavors, while that bright Carneros acidity keeps it clean and lively. —S.H.

92 Kessler-Haak 2008 Chardonnay (Sta. Rita Hills); \$29.

This fancy, opulent Chardonnay is made in a certain Santa Rita style of high alcohol, which makes it enormously rich. It oozes pineapple, pear and lime jam fruit, while new oak adds buttered toast flavors and the glycerine from 15.5% alcohol makes the wine even creamier and sweeter. This is an inaugural vintage from the winery. —S.H.

92 Vina Robles 2009 Chardonnay (Monterey); \$19.

Just when this Chard seems simple and sweet, the fruit is overtaken by acidity and minerality, taking the tangerine, lime and mango flavors to the next level and making the wine complex and fascinating.

Shows how exceptional winemaking can result in exceptional wine. **Editors' Choice.** —S.H.

91 Expression 38 2008 Gap's Crown Vineyard Chardonnay (Sonoma Coast); \$38.

A modern style coastal Chardonnay, brimming with acidity and starring major league pineapple, tangerine, Asian pear, buttered toast and honey vanilla flavors. Very rich and flamboyant. Calls for a rich shellfish dish in a cream sauce. —S.H.

91 Freestone 2008 Chardonnay (Sonoma Coast); \$55.

What's so nice about this Chardonnay is the way the dryness, acidity and minerality combine with tropical fruit to make for a splendid, Chablis-style California wine. It's a connoisseur's Chardonnay, requiring some understanding of structure. Don't drink it too cold; could even stand a brief decant at room temperature. —S.H.

90 Buehler 2009 Reserve Chardonnay (Russian River Valley); \$20.

This is the kind of Chardonnay that divides wine lovers into enemy camps. Old World purists will criticize the candied richness. New World fans will love the toasted marshmallow, caramel corn and buttered toast flavors that rest on a solid foundation of pineapple and green apple fruit. —S.H.

90 Expression 38 2008 Chardonnay (Sonoma Coast); \$23.

Marked by zesty acidity and dryness, this Chard shows long hangtime, ripe flavors of pineapples, lemons and sweet green apples. Minerality grounds the fruit, making the wine savory and clean. Gets better as it warms in the glass, a very good sign. —S.H.

90 Fogdog 2008 Chardonnay (Sonoma Coast); \$35.

Marked by big, sharp acidity, like biting into a lime, and clean, linear flavors of limes, green apples and pineapples, this bone-dry Chardonnay badly needs food to balance it out. Think of bacon-wrapped grilled shrimp, or a spicy Ahi tuna tartare dish. —S.H.

90 Isabel Mondavi 2009 Chardonnay (Carneros); \$25.

A very pleasant Chardonnay that's lifted above the ordinary by a brisk, dry minerality. Orange, lemon and pear fruit stars, with a suggestion of toast and complicated notes of anise, vanilla and cream. —S.H.

90 Joel Gott 2009 Unoaked Chardonnay (Monterey); \$16.

Believe me,

you won't miss the oak barrel influence on this wine. It's so good all by itself. Brightened with crisp Monterey acidity and totally dry, it's rich in pineapple, tangerine, Meyer lemon, lime, mineral and vanilla flavors that will satisfy your Chardonnay tooth. **Editors' Choice.** —S.H.

90 Ken Brown 2008 Nielson Vineyard Chardonnay (Santa Maria Valley); \$35. Produced from this famous cool-climate vineyard, the wine is zesty in acidity and dry, but enormously rich and impressive in pineapple and pear flavors, with a distinct minerality that makes it feel drier and earthier. It's a strong wine, but subtle. Drink now, but not too cold. —S.H.

90 Lincourt 2008 Chardonnay (Sta. Rita Hills); \$27. Rich and oaky, with brisk acidity framing delicious flavors of pineapple custard, buttered toast and crème brûlée. Elegant and impressive for drinking now. —S.H.

89 Bishop's Peak 2009 Chardonnay (Central Coast); \$15. Searing acidity marks this wine, which tastes like it has a lot of Edna Valley fruit in the blend. It also shows bright, strong, long hangtime flavors of limes and pineapples. It's actually quite a fine Chardonnay, dry and low in alcohol. A great value at this price. **Editors' Choice.** —S.H.

89 Horse & Plow 2009 McFadden Farm Chardonnay (Mendocino); \$20. Horse & Plow sourced organic grapes to craft this excellent Chardonnay, giving it the luxe treatment—handpicked, whole-cluster pressed, French oak barrel fermentation and aging nine months sur lee—and it shows. The wine is pretty, with a tropical bouquet that gives way to just enough oak-driven vanilla. Will age nicely but is also ready to drink now. —V.B.

89 La Fenêtre 2008 Sierra Madre Vineyard Chardonnay (Santa Maria Valley); \$38. This Pinot Noir is so rich in fruit and oak, it tastes like a melted dessert tart. Wows with raspberry and cherry jam, vanilla bean, bacon, buttered cinnamon toast and smoky wood flavors, wrapped into a light, airy texture. Drink it now with a terrific steak. —S.H.

89 La Fenêtre 2008 Bien Nacido Vineyard Chardonnay (Santa Maria Valley); \$40. This is a very rich Chardonnay, almost too elaborated and overworked. It's tremendous in oak-infused fruit, with dominat-

ing buttered toast, crème brûlée and pineapple pie flavors. Very crisp coastal acidity provides a pleasant balance of tartness. Drink now. —S.H.

89 Lincourt 2009 Steel Chardonnay (Sta. Rita Hills); \$18. Lincourt's grapes are so rich and well grown that they don't even need oak to make a delicious Chardonnay. The wine is dry and crisp, with appealing flavors of pineapples, tangerines and Meyer lemons. The savory creaminess seems to come from aging on the lees. What a great food wine. **Editors' Choice.** —S.H.

89 Matanzas Creek 2008 Journey Chardonnay (Sonoma County); \$75. Fresh tropical fruit, peach and apricot flavors star in this flashy young wine. Oak also plays a prominent role, giving buttered toast and caramel notes. And the texture is creamy and smooth. The overall impression is very rich and powerful, but the wine could have more finesse. Drink now. —S.H.

89 Morgan 2009 Metallico Un-Oaked Chardonnay (Monterey); \$20. This Chardonnay is so delicious in citrus, tropical fruit, peach and vanilla bean flavors, brightened with brisk acidity, that you hardly miss the absence of oak. —S.H.

89 Wood Family Vineyards 2009 Para Mas Amigas Chardonnay (Livermore Valley); \$22. This impressive Chardonnay from a small Livermore Valley producer is on the austere side of Chardonnay, with notes of just-ripe pear, tiny hints of wet stone, a nice, nutty finish and enough body to go with a wealth of foods. Good balance too. —V.B.

88 Patz & Hall 2008 Zio Tony Ranch Chardonnay (Russian River Valley); \$60. Made in a very ripe, very oaky manner, this Chardonnay is extraordinarily rich now, if not very subtle. It's all about power. Buttered toast, caramel cream, pineapple marmalade, lime, orange and spice flavors flood the mouth, snapping to an oaky finish. —S.H.

88 Santa Barbara Winery 2008 Reserve Chardonnay (Sta. Rita Hills); \$22. Very rich, ripe, oaky and delicious. Dazzles with waves of buttercream, buttered toast, buttered popcorn and butter-drizzled bananas, with plenty of underlying pineapple

fruit and honey. Could be more subtle, though. It's all on the surface. —S.H.

87 Girard 2009 Chardonnay (Russian River Valley); \$22. Here's an oaky, ripe Chardonnay for those who like these strong, direct hits. It's powerful in tropical fruit, citrus, pear and green apple flavors, with a creamy overlay of buttery oak. Drink now. —S.H.

87 La Fenêtre 2008 Los Alamos Vineyard Chardonnay (Santa Barbara County); \$35. Oak overpowers this wine, dominating with buttered toast and caramel flavors. Underneath is pineapple and peach fruit and zesty acidity. It would be nice to have the wine-maker back off on the barrels and emphasize the underlying wine. —S.H.

87 Lafond 2008 SRH Chardonnay (Sta. Rita Hills); \$22. Drink this with very rich foods, such as shellfish in a buttery cream sauce. It's a big, oaky, caramelly wine, with ripe pineapples beneath the oak. A little soft, but smooth and silky. An elegant Chardonnay for drinking now. —S.H.

87 Liberty School 2008 Chardonnay (Central Coast); \$12. Good price for a dry, crisp and flavor Chardonnay with some real fancy character. Flatters the palate with opulent pineapple jam, pear, lemon and orange fruit flavors, finished with rich oak. **Best Buy.** —S.H.

87 Lincourt 2008 Chardonnay (Santa Barbara County); \$20. Made in a dry, lean style, this Chard has plenty of elegance. It has citrus, pear and mineral flavors, with a touch of oak and bright, brisk, coastal acidity. —S.H.

87 Patz & Hall 2008 Dutton Ranch Chardonnay (Russian River Valley); \$39. A little obvious in its appeal to our liking for oak and ripe fruit. Who can criticize the pineapples, citrons, tangerines and green apples, with their overlay of caramel and buttered toast? Rich as it is, you find yourself wishing it were more subtle and nuanced. Drink now. —S.H.

87 Patz & Hall 2008 Hudson Vineyard Chardonnay (Carneros); \$55. Rich as can be, but oak dominates, giving the wine buttered toast and caramelized vanilla flavors, and you'll even find notes of buttered popcorn. Although there's lovely pineapple and citron fruit

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and fine Carneros acidity, this Chardonnay tastes overly manipulated. —S.H.

87 Q 2009 Discovery Chardonnay (Russian River Valley); \$11. Packs plenty of punch into an inexpensive, everyday Chardonnay. With brisk, tangy acidity, it offers rich, appealing flavors of pineapples, green apples, vanilla and sweet, creamy butter. **Best Buy.** —S.H.

87 Steven Kent 2007 Merrillie, EWV Block 32220 Chardonnay (Livermore Valley); \$25. A big, lush Chardonnay from the Wente family's Ernest Wente Vineyard, this is barrel fermented and aged on lees for a long 18 months in new American and French oak. A successful layering of ripe apples, a tinge of pineapple and hearty bread with tons of texture and length made in an opulent California style. —V.B.

86 Arrow Creek 2009 Coastal Series Chardonnay (California); \$18. It's all here, the ripe tropical fruit, the smoky oak, the buttered toast and vanilla and cream. Hits that Chardonnay sweet spot with pinpoint accuracy. —S.H.

86 Educated Guess 2008 Chardonnay (Napa Valley); \$17. Ripe and oaky in the modern style, with strong apricot, tangerine, pineapple and peach flavors and a buttery, creamy texture. Offers lots of upfront Chardonnay character. —S.H.

86 Sebastiani 2009 Unoaked Chardonnay (Russian River Valley); \$18. Made without oak, although the wine has a tart leanness that would have benefited from a little barrel exposure. Nonetheless, it's dry and crisp and minerally, with modest pineapple, Meyer lemon and flower flavors. —S.H.

86 Wente 2009 Morning Fog Chardonnay (Livermore Valley); \$14.99. Wente is well known for its Wente clone, a popular sight in many a California Chardonnay vineyard. This flavorful example is compellingly rich and textured, yet modest in alcohol, with a happy apple, melon taste and a bit of an exotic lift on the finish, possibly from the 2% Gewürztraminer that's blended in. —V.B.

85 Fog Crest 2007 Estate Chardonnay (Russian River Valley); \$45. Tastes

tired, with jammy tropical fruit flavors starting to drop out. Still shows vibrant acidity, but the fresh fruit character, the most likeable part of such Chardonnays, is disappearing, replaced by more herbal and vegetal notes. —S.H.

85 Guenoc 2009 Chardonnay (Lake County); \$14. From the Langtry Estate in Guenoc, Lake County, this has very intense pineapple on the nose and palate, and is rich and sweet on the finish. Pair it with spicy food or something briny from the sea. —V.B.

85 Hahn 2007 SHL Estate Chardonnay (Santa Lucia Highlands); \$25. Nicely dry and crisp, with some good pineapple flavors enriched with oak. Loses points, however, due to a certain vegetal character that's compounded by the fruit starting to fall out. —S.H.

85 Jax 2009 Y3 Chardonnay (Napa Valley); \$19. Made in the modern style of lots of ripe tropical fruit, green apple and creamy oak flavors, this Chardonnay is uplifted by bright, citrusy acidity. Drink it now. —S.H.

85 Mossback 2009 Chardonnay (Russian River Valley); \$18. An everyday Chardonnay with a creamy texture and oak-inspired buttered toast notes. The underlying fruit has pineapple and orange flavors. —S.H.

85 Rutherford Ranch 2009 Chardonnay (Napa Valley); \$16. Made in an oaky, creamy style to appeal to popular tastes, this Chardonnay has jammy pineapple flavors. It's brisk in acidity and is somewhat simple, but the price isn't bad. —S.H.

85 Santa Barbara Winery 2009 Chardonnay (Santa Barbara County); \$15. A pretty, polished and simple wine that shows the buttery creaminess, toast, popcorn and pineapple jam flavors people like. Easy to find, with more than 17,000 cases produced. —S.H.

85 Sebastiani 2008 Chardonnay (Sonoma County); \$13. A rich, oaky, fruity Chardonnay with lots of tropical fruit flavors. Pretty standard, but the price is pretty good for this style. —S.H.

85 Wellington 2009 Chardonnay (Sonoma Valley); \$20. Creamy and polished, with good acidity and pleasant citrus,

buttered popcorn and mineral flavors. Could be a little more complex. —S.H.

84 Coastline 2009 Chardonnay (Monterey County); \$10. Lots of Chardonnay fans will like the ripe pineapple and lime fruit, creamy texture and oaky flavors of buttered toast and vanilla. It's a little sweet, but Central Coast acidity helps to balance. —S.H.

84 Elements by Artesa 2009 Chardonnay (Napa County / Sonoma County); \$15. A simple Chardonnay, with pineapple, apple and mango fruit juice flavors, brightened with zesty acidity. —S.H.

84 Hahn 2009 Chardonnay (Santa Lucia Highlands); \$12. Direct and strong in pineapple and pear jam flavors, this Chardonnay also has notes of vanilla and buttered toast. —S.H.

84 Hilltown 2009 Chardonnay (Monterey County); \$7. Good value in a dry, zesty Monterey Chardonnay. Marked by crisp, mouthwatering acidity, it offers simple flavors of tropical fruits, buttercream and vanilla. —S.H.

84 Q 2009 Chardonnay (Sonoma County); \$12. Lots of ripe pineapple jam and oak flavors on this sweet, creamy wine. Nothing complicated, but good enough to satisfy fans of the variety. —S.H.

84 Spellbound 2009 Chardonnay (California); \$15. Simple, soft and sweet, with buttered popcorn, buttered toast and sugared pineapple jam flavors. Nice acidity, though, and a nice creamy texture. —S.H.

84 Vinum 2008 Chardonnay (California); \$12. Sweet and appealing, this simple Chard has candied pineapple and lemon cream flavors, accented with crisp acidity. —S.H.

83 Bota Box 2009 Chardonnay (California); \$19/3 L. Tastes like a fruit juice blend of oranges, peaches and apricots, with a kiss of oak flavor. Standard fare, this boxed wine is the equivalent of four regular bottles. —S.H.

82 Boekenooen 2008 Chardonnay (Santa Lucia Highlands); \$34. There's an unripe, vegetal taste that detracts from the wine's otherwise fine qualities. It's dry and

crisp and minerally, with pineapple fruit. But that asparagus edge is annoying. —S.H.

82 Broadway Vineyards 2009 Chardonnay (Carneros); \$24. Fruity sweet and cloying, with the flavor of pineapple jam and buttered popcorn and a sprinkle of white sugar for good measure. —S.H.

82 Broadway Vineyards 2008 Chardonnay (Carneros); \$34. Feels soft and cloyingly sweet in pineapple jam and buttered popcorn flavors, and is beginning to be tired and old. Drink up. —S.H.

SAUVIGNON BLANC

93 Matanzas Creek 2009 Helena Bench Sauvignon Blanc (Knights Valley); \$38. Bone dry, and brightened with zesty acidity, this fabulous SB defines the category. Accented with a touch of oak, it stars potent citrus and tropical fruit, green apple, white flower and mineral flavors, with a complexity that makes it easily worth the price. Gets better and better as it warms in the glass. —S.H.

92 Arkenstone 2007 Sauvignon Blanc (Howell Mountain); \$45. An upscale white wine made in the white Bordeaux style. It was partially aged in oak, on the lees, bringing a creamy, yeasty freshness to the citrus, tropical fruit and green grass flavors that are totally dry. Brisk acidity makes for a clean scour. A brilliant wine to drink with everything from goat cheese appetizers through firm fleshed fish like halibut to roast chicken. —S.H.

91 Dragonette 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Happy Canyon of Santa Barbara); \$35. This barrel selection of wines shows how well Sauvignon Blanc does in Happy Canyon. The variety was already a star in Santa Ynez Valley, but growing it in a warmer region adds ripeness and richness. It's lush in citrus and honeysuckle, with crisp acidity and oak barrel influences. —S.H.

90 Matanzas Creek 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Sonoma County); \$19. A fine, bone-dry and minerally Sauvignon Blanc to enjoy with shellfish, grilled chicken or on its own as an appetizer. A touch of oak adds richness to the vibrant, acidic citrus fruit, lemongrass and green apple flavors. *Editors' Choice.* —S.H.

90 Wente 2009 Louis Mel Sauvignon Blanc (Livermore Valley); \$15. This varietally correct Sauvignon Blanc is clean, crisp and refreshing, with plenty of honey, pineapple and green apple, and yet has some meat on its bones, with a rich mouthfeel that belies its all-stainless-steel aging. It also has just a touch (2%) of Sémillon. *Best Buy.* —V.B.

87 3CV 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Happy Canyon of Santa Barbara); \$18. If you like that bite of gooseberry and dry, green grass and hay flavors, this is for you. It's dry and tart in acidity, made richer with citrus fruit, white flower and vanilla. Would be great with goat cheese. —S.H.

87 Santa Barbara Winery 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Santa Ynez Valley); \$15. Good, strong citrus fruit, wildflower and honey flavors in this wine, and powerful acidity too, like a squirt of lime juice. Some barrel influence shows up in creamy vanilla. Would be nice now as a cocktail sipper. —S.H.

87 Stolpman 2009 Estate Sauvignon Blanc (Santa Ynez Valley); \$22. This is a strongly flavored wine with grapey flavors of fresh pineapples, limes, lemons and vanilla. It has a tang taste of minerals that grounds it. As fruity as it is, it finishes fully dry. Good now with Asian-inspired fare. —S.H.

87 Tin Barn 2009 Hi Vista Vineyard Sauvignon Blanc (Carneros); \$18. With zesty acidity and dry pineapple, lemon, lime and green grassy flavors, this is a nice white wine to drink for a cocktail with little appetizers ranging from puff pastries to egg rolls to smoked meats. —S.H.

85 Oberon 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Napa Valley); \$15. This is a dry, simple Sauvignon Blanc. It's marked by crisp acidity and zesty citrus fruit and green grass flavors. Feels clean, vibrant and mouthwatering. —S.H.

85 Peju 2009 Estate Bottled Sauvignon Blanc (Napa Valley); \$22. This is one of those Sauvignons that has that grassy, gooseberry aroma and flavor that approaches ammonia, but stops just short in favor of lemons and limes. It's crisp and a little sweet. —S.H.

84 Eagles Landing 2008 Sauvignon Blanc (Central Coast); \$25. Creamy and a little unripe, with a vegetal edge to the citrus and pear flavors. It's dry, acidic and clean. Works for everyday fare. —S.H.

84 Langtry 2009 Lillie Vineyard Sauvignon Blanc (Guenoc Valley); \$20. Very light in color and, alas, pleasing flavors, this 100% Sauvignon Blanc from the Langtry Estate's organically farmed Lillie Vineyard begins with guava and coconut, very tropical, but gives in too easily to a not quite ideal level of sweetness and a finish that can only be described, unhappily, as bitter. —V.B.

84 Parkers Estate 2009 Tolleson High Corniche Sauvignon Blanc (Sonoma County); \$20. A sound, everyday Sauvignon Blanc. It has ripe citrus fruit flavors that are jammy sweet, with crisp acidity. —S.H.

83 Rutherford Ranch 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Napa Valley); \$15. Simple and direct, with sweet and sour flavors of lemon and lime Lifesaver candy. Okay for big parties where they're not fussy. —S.H.

PINOT GRIS/GRIGIO

88 Navarro 2009 Pinot Gris (Anderson Valley); \$19. This rich, sweetly fruity and creamy wine is almost dessert-like. It has vibrant tropical fruit and peach flavors that taste like they were baked into a pie. But it's also very acidic, and the finish is dry. Great as a cocktail sipper; try with Thai and Vietnamese fare. —S.H.

87 Hahn 2009 Pinot Gris (Monterey); \$12. Lots going on in this affordable wine. It's zesty in acidity, with a minerally bite to the pineapple, green apple and pear jam fruit. Straddles the border between dry and honey sweet. *Best Buy.* —S.H.

86 Horse & Plow 2009 Filigreen Farm Pinot Gris (Anderson Valley); \$20. Good, dry and crisp, if a little simple, with apricot, citrus and vanilla flavors. There's a touch of green unripeness that detracts, but it's a pretty nice wine. —S.H.

85 Hahn Estates 2008 SLH Estate Pinot Gris (Santa Lucia Highlands); \$20. A touch of unripeness compromises this

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otherwise fine Pinot Noir, which shows pleasant cola, raspberry and oak flavors. If you're not fussy, it's a good bottle, dry, silky and crisp. —S.H.

84 Coastline 2009 Pinot Grigio (Monterey County); \$10. Zesty Monterey acidity makes this slightly sweet wine clean and brisk. The flavors suggest sugared orange and pineapple juice. —S.H.

84 Tamás Estates 2009 Pinot Grigio (Central Coast); \$10. Gets the job done with this dry, crisp everyday sipper. Shows citrus, fig and apricot, with a minty spiciness. Good for cocktails or with appetizers. —S.H.

OTHER WHITE WINES

94 Arrowood 2008 Special Select Late Harvest Saralee's Vineyards White Riesling (Russian River Valley); \$35/375 ml. A great success for this bottling. With extraordinarily high residual sugar, the wine is very sweet in wild honey, infused with the essence of oranges and apricots, folded into rich, buttery custard, and sprinkled with vanilla sugar and cinnamon. It's all balanced with a squirt of lime acid. If that sounds good, it is. Only 95 cases were produced, but finding this wine is worth a search. *Editors' Choice.* —S.H.

91 Trefethen 2008 Dry Riesling (Oak Knoll); \$22. Like it says, this Riesling is bone dry. It's also crisp in acidity, with a tang of minerals and steel. It gains richness from a rich core of lemon, lime and orange citrus flavors, and possesses that note of diesel that a fine, cool climate Riesling shows. Should develop over the next six years. *Editors' Choice.* —S.H.

90 Murrieta's Well 2007 White Meritage Sémillon-Sauvignon Blanc (Livermore Valley); \$22. Dark yellow honey in color, this fine blend of 52% Sémillon, 48% Sauvignon Blanc is a nice ode to white Bordeaux, very French in its austerity, with plenty of creaminess and barrel richness, too. Its layers of lemon, peach, honeysuckle and butterscotch unveil themselves slowly, the wine's depth opening over time. —V.B.

90 Navarro 2009 Edelszwicker (Anderson Valley); \$13. A fascinating wine. Tastes sweet and finishes bone dry, offering rich, tangerine and honey flavors, accented with crisp

acidity. Nice as a cocktail sipper, and will play well with Asian fare. *Editors' Choice.* —S.H.

90 Standing Sun 2009 Terra Alta Vineyard Le Blanc (Santa Barbara County); \$24. Made from Grenache Blanc and Viognier, this pretty and enormously likeable white wine was barrel fermented. It has pleasant flavors of citrus fruits, raspberries, vanilla, white pepper, buttered toast and sandalwood. The finish is clean and zesty. —S.H.

89 3CV 2009 Viognier (Happy Canyon of Santa Barbara); \$18. Shows the exotic side of Viognier, with crisp acidity and a dry minerality that gets the tastebuds whistling. The lime, quince, apricot, white flower and woodspice flavors finish with the briskness of a Sauvignon Blanc, only more opulent. —S.H.

89 Gypsy Canyon NV Ancient Vine Angelica Debit (Sta. Rita Hills); \$130. A lovely dessert wine in almost every respect. It's crisp in acidity and has complex, somewhat oxidized or Madeira-like flavors of oranges, tapioca and vanilla. Could be a little more focused and intense, but very fine, although it calls for a certain appreciation of this oxidative quality. —S.H.

89 Navarro 2009 Estate Gewürztraminer (Anderson Valley); \$19. Another lovely Gewurz from Navarro. Made with neutral oak fermentation, it's rich and crisp and spicy, with a mélange of exotic fruit and wild-flower flavors. —S.H.

88 Navarro 2009 Estate Muscat Blanc (Anderson Valley); \$19. A beautifully rich and complex wine showing the orange flavors of the variety, and the crisp acidity of its cool-climate origin. Feels authoritative and clean in the mouth, almost the perfect cocktail sipper. But it will also be great with salty foods, like ham, chorizo, sausages. —S.H.

88 Palmina 2009 Honea Vineyard Arneis (Santa Ynez Valley); \$18. For those unfamiliar with Arneis, it's a little like Sauvignon Blanc or Pinot Grigio, with citrus, apple and kiwi flavors. It's also high in acidity and dry, making it ideal as a cocktail sipper with savory small appetizers. —S.H.

88 Steven Kent 2009 Lola Ghielmetti Vineyard Sémillon-Sauvignon

Blanc (Livermore Valley); \$20. An unoaked marriage of Sémillon (55%) and Sauvignon Blanc (45%) from Steven Kent Winery's new estate vineyard, this light golden-colored wine has flowery aromas that give way to a lush minerality of slate and stone, with good texture, lemony lightness and balance though not as lush a finish as of yet. Age another 1–3 years. —V.B.

87 Carol Shelton 2008 Coquille Blanc (Paso Robles); \$30. Made in a sweet, candied style, with flavors of pineapples, mangoes, roasted almond granola and vanilla. Could almost serve as a dessert wine. Drink now. —S.H.

87 Field Recordings 2008 Jurassic Park Chenin Blanc (Santa Ynez Valley); \$16. One of the few Chenin Blancs from Santa Ynez Valley, and a pretty one. Made with a bit of oak, it's dry and acidic, as the variety should be in California, with citrus, floral and mineral flavors. *Editors' Choice.* —S.H.

87 Santa Barbara Winery 2009 Lafond Vineyard Riesling (Sta. Rita Hills); \$15. Delicious flavors of lemons, limes, tangerines and honey in this wine, with notes of flowers and steel. It's also very acidic and off dry. A simple Riesling, but a clean and attractive one. —S.H.

86 Clavo Cellars 2008 Oracle Grenache Blanc (Paso Robles); \$20. Soft and sweet in fruit and honey, like a dessert pastry, with a clean scour of acidity. It's rich and long in pineapple, orange, buttered toast and cinnamon spice flavors. —S.H.

86 L'Avion 2008 Roussanne (Central Coast); \$38. A simple, slightly sweet and soft white wine, with vanilla, apricot, tangerine and lemon flavors. —S.H.

86 Wellington 2009 Estate Vineyard Marsanne (Sonoma Valley); \$22. A nice, slightly sweet white wine, with tropical fruit, buttered toast, white flower and vanilla flavors. Easy to drink as a cocktail sipper. —S.H.

SPARKLING WINES

89 J Vineyards & Winery NV J Brut Rosé (Russian River Valley); \$30. With a pretty salmon color, this is a dry and very rich bubbly. It has subtle strawberry, raspberry,

lime and yeast flavors. Could be smoother and more refined in texture, but it's a polished wine to drink now, especially with sushi. —S.H.

87 J Vineyards & Winery NV J Cuvée 20 (Russian River Valley); \$22. A nice brut style wine with plenty of flavor. Satisfies for its range of citrus fruits, strawberries, vanilla and brioche. Very rich and delicate, although it's a little coarse. Drink now. —S.H.

OREGON RED WINES

PINOT NOIR

95 Ponzi 2008 Reserve Pinot Noir (Willamette Valley); \$60. A gorgeous wine, lush and refined from the first sniff to the last swallow. Rose petals, cotton candy, chocolate-covered cherries—it's a date in a bottle. As the wine rolls across the palate it seems to gain depth and detail, while keeping the exceptionally pretty fruit flavors front and center. Silky and lightly spicy, with cinnamon, toast, mocha and tobacco highlights. *Editors' Choice.* —P.G.

93 Adelsheim 2008 Zenith Vineyard Pinot Noir (Eola-Amity Hills); \$90. Though Adelsheim offers a large assortment of single-vineyard Pinots, this is the first they've made from Zenith. It surely won't be the last. Concentrated, thick black raspberry and black cherry fruit centers a substantial wine, laced with vivid streaks of vanilla, tobacco and spice. The immediate impact of the fruit is amplified by the density on the palate, and the finish, loaded with baking spices, reflects the aging in one-third new French oak barrels. —P.G.

93 Ponzi 2008 Abetina Vineyard Pinot Noir (Willamette Valley); \$100. This two-acre site dates back to 1975; this is only the fourth time that Ponzi has offered it as a designate. Muscular and authoritative, it is still compact and somewhat unyielding. Dark cherry and cassis fruit is packed with iron filings, coffee grounds and black licorice. Winemaker Luisa Ponzi does her usual excellent job of putting the polish on outstanding fruit. Give it another decade and it will show its best. *Cellar Selection.* —P.G.

92 Erath 2008 Fuqua Pinot Noir (Dundee Hills); \$47. Good concentration, which gives the fruit more plum and black cherry than red raspberry. It's deep and sinuous, with threads of graphite and smoke, but the fruit is the star here, and the wine has the concentration and acidity to cellar well for a decade or more. *Cellar Selection.* —P.G.

92 Quest Cellars 2008 Pinot Noir (Willamette Valley); \$26. A fine bottle, fresh and fruity, with cranberry, raspberry and cherry fruit in abundance. It's got depth and vitality, a youthful verve that promises fine ageability. Aged in 28% new French oak, it is just barely kissed with toast and mocha. A wonderful value. *Editors' Choice.* —P.G.

92 Willamette Valley Vineyards 2008 South Block Pinot Noir (Willamette Valley); \$45. Pretty and complex, this delivers a mélange of interesting flavors. Round, tart fruits—berries and sour plum—mingle with dried leaves, cut tobacco and mushroom. Somehow a citrus streak sneaks into the finish, giving the wine a lemony lift. Delicious already, it can be cellared for another 5–6 years. *Editors' Choice.* —P.G.

91 ArborBrook Vineyards 2008 Estate 777 Block Pinot Noir (Chehalem Mountains); \$45. This is a truly appealing wine that seduces with chocolate-covered cherry flavors and soft, inviting tannins. The balance and concentration are all in proportion, with no reliance on too much new oak (just 25% first use) for the flavor. Details of spice and fresh tarragon enliven the aftertaste. —P.G.

91 ArborBrook Vineyards 2008 Vintner's Select Pinot Noir (Chehalem Mountains); \$60. This is the reserve, a barrel selection limited to just 100 cases. The selection was done well and is meaningful; this has more grip and body than the excellent Estate 777 Pinot Noir that precedes it in price. A mix of Northwest berries define the fruit, set against moderately stiff tannins with suggestions of caramel from the oak aging. Put this one in the cellar. *Cellar Selection.* —P.G.

91 Domaine Drouhin Oregon 2008 Pinot Noir (Willamette Valley); \$45. Once again, the Burgundian touch of Veronique Drouhin has crafted a wine of surpassing elegance and immaculate structure. This is

the antithesis of a jammy, California style yet it retains much of the vibrancy of New World fruit rather than the suppressed rusticity of Burgundy. Delicate cherry and tart plum fruit is sculpted into a wine with nuanced details of cola and coffee and spice. *Editors' Choice.* —P.G.

91 Domaine Drouhin Oregon 2007 Laurène Pinot Noir (Dundee Hills); \$65. The Laurène–Drouhin Family Estate Reserve brings a bit more earthiness to the table than the regular DDO bottling. In the mouth, the fruit—a delicate jumble of raspberry, pomegranate, cranberry and sour cherry—mingles with streaks of caramel, herb and leaf. A wine that will reward both cellaring (at least a decade) and studying. *Cellar Selection.* —P.G.

91 Left Coast Cellars 2006 Cali's Cuvée Pinot Noir (Willamette Valley); \$24. A home run. Given extra bottle age, this is drinking optimally at the moment, with a spicy, brambly nose mixing blackberries, mint and chocolate-covered cherries. There's a scent of fresh cut wood also, and a mouthful of fruit and barrel flavors that are both nicely integrated and complementary. The long finish lingers into a resonant note of black tea. —P.G.

91 Lumos 2008 North Temperance Pinot Noir (Willamette Valley); \$38. From a single block at Temperance Hill, this aromatic wine neatly captures the terroir without pushing too hard. There are herbal nuances, a hint of hazelnut, some earth and wet stone, all nicely blended into a wine that is robust but accessible. Good balance and well-managed tannins. —P.G.

91 Soléna 2008 Domaine Danielle Laurent Pinot Noir (Yamhill-Carlton District); \$50. There's an odd plastic note here. Firm and compact, with unyielding fruit; black cherry, leaf and black tea flavors dominate. This seems closed down even after being open for several hours. —P.G.

91 Trisaetum 2008 Estate Pinot Noir (Willamette Valley); \$75. Trisaetum is making some of the most exciting Rieslings in Oregon; now it can add Pinot Noir to its hit list. Estate grown, elegant and showing more than a little new French oak, this toasty wine drinks like a young Chambolle-Musigny. The tannins are sculpted and firm; the fruit ripe and racy with a mélange of red berries and currants. Give this

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more time in the bottle to absorb the new oak and shed some of the herbal aromas. —P.G.

91 Willamette Valley Vineyards 2008 Hannah Vineyard Pinot Noir (Willamette Valley); \$45. Hannah vineyard is a select block at the highest point of Tualatin Estate. Distinctive with a streak of pine resin running through darker flavors of black raspberry, black cherry and clean earth, it finishes with a lick of black licorice. —P.G.

90 Carabella 2008 Pinot Noir (Chehalem Mountains); \$39. This excellent grower/producer has crafted a ripe, muscular Pinot Noir with the accent on spicy cranberry, plum and cherry compote. Adding complexity are the unfolding barrel flavors—chocolate in particular—and a suggestion of root beer that marks it as Chehalem Mountains fruit. —P.G.

90 Erath 2008 La Nuit Magique Pinot Noir (Willamette Valley); \$65. Positioned as the top wine in the massive Erath lineup, La Nuit Magique was not made in 2007, but it's back in 2008. A welcome relief from all the single-vineyard wines, this blends the top barrels from excellent vineyards, slathers them in chocolate oak, and the result is a palate-pleasing, open, warm, generous wine which might come from California. Sappy berry compote, enlivened with juicy acids, and finished with plenty of sweet, toasty oak. —P.G.

90 Erath 2008 Prince Hill Pommard Pinot Noir (Dundee Hills); \$50. This is a smooth customer, with a rich, silky mouthfeel, and has the soft seductive velvety character that allows it to feel complete as a standalone clone. It stops a bit short in the finish, hitting some herbal tannins, but resonates with pretty barrel notes of caramel and a hint of honey. —P.G.

90 Libra 2008 Momtazi Vineyard Pinot Noir (McMinnville); \$35. The star of the show among the three Libra wines tasted, this biodynamically-farmed offering is dark and exotic, with a range of scents from cherry liqueur to cinnamon, anise, and flowers. It breathes open into a perfumed and spicy wine, with accents of orange peel around substantial, brambly fruit. —P.G.

90 Panther Creek 2007 Freedom Hill Vineyard Pinot Noir (Willamette

Valley); \$40. Among the four different single-vineyard selections tasted, this showed best. Strawberry/cherry fruit is spiced up with dark chocolate and a thread of pine sap. Long and layered, this offering shows enough vineyard character to make a designate compelling. —P.G.

90 Redhawk 2008 Estate Pinot Noir (Eola-Amity Hills); \$22. A fine, appealing and complex wine, Redhawk's estate bottling shows more concentration than its less expensive stablemates, with nuances of bloody meat and mint that give it an almost Rhônish character. The alcohol is under 14%, and it drinks like a Burgundy, only with beefier tannins. *Editors' Choice.* —P.G.

90 Sokol Blosser 2008 Goosepen Block Pinot Noir (Dundee Hills); \$60. The Goosepen bottling is distinctive, elegant and spicy, with a mix of baking spices, soft fruits, chocolate, coconut and butter. Certainly the barrel program is a success, but it supports pretty fruit flavors of blackberry and sweet plum, and the tannins are soft and seductive. A very pretty, approachable wine. —P.G.

90 Sokol Blosser 2008 Peach Tree Block Pinot Noir (Dundee Hills); \$60. Forward and immediately delicious, this has a mix of peach, pear, apple and the more expected red fruits; it's a wild panoply of fruit flavor, with balancing acids and tannins. Round, forward, full bodied and textural, it is a uniquely flavorful wine with distinctive fruit-laden profile. —P.G.

90 Sokol Blosser 2008 Estate Cuvée Pinot Noir (Dundee Hills); \$50. Great entry, soft and seductive, with cherry and chocolate, but it dies quickly, fading into a delicate malted milk flavor. Re-tasted after being open for several hours, it had gained a little flesh, retained the milk chocolate flavors, but still seemed to need more bottle age to soften up the finish. —P.G.

90 Soléna 2008 Zena Crown Vineyard Pinot Noir (Eola-Amity Hills); \$40. Fruit from this Willamette Valley sub-AVA usually shows an herbal side, and here it is nicely melded into a fruit mix of melon, berry and pear. It sounds oddly like a white wine, but it's not; and the color and scents are clearly varietal. Penetrating and sharp, with excellent definition. —P.G.

90 Stoller 2007 SV Estate Pinot Noir (Dundee Hills); \$40. A real success in a challenging vintage, this is a meaty, flavorful, well-built Pinot Noir. The fruit is a mix of berries, especially strawberry, with accents of peach, cola, earth, sassafras and cinnamon. The wine keeps on going; it doesn't wimp out or turn bitter. It's interesting now, but should develop even more flavor with some years of cellaring. —P.G.

90 Stoller 2008 JV Estate Pinot Noir (Dundee Hills); \$25. Young and spicy, with deeply-etched cranberry fruit flavors, limned with leafy herbal tannins. The core of fruit is pretty as can be, and the nicely-managed tannins wrap it in a perfect frame, while giving it added muscle. Another two or three years in the bottle will really bring this into focus. *Editors' Choice.* —P.G.

90 Willamette Valley Vineyards 2008 O'Brien Pinot Noir (Eola-Amity Hills); \$100. Like the winery's "Fuller" Pinot Noir, this special, limited-edition offering honors some Oregon wine industry stalwarts, the owners of Elton Vineyards. It clearly reflects the flavors of the Eola-Amity Hills AVA—no tricks or attempts to hide the natural earthy, herbal character. Herb and sassafras, pine needle and sour cherry, spice and even a hint of pickle barrel (American oak?) mingle pleasantly, and the alcohol remains at a comfortable 13.3%. —P.G.

90 Willamette Valley Vineyards 2008 Fuller Pinot Noir (Willamette Valley); \$100. This limited-production offering pays tribute to Bill Fuller, founder of Tualatin Vineyards and one of the pioneers of Oregon's modern era wine industry. Nicely balanced, it mixes tart red fruits, juicy acids, highlights of spice and a persistent underpinning of dried leaves. —P.G.

90 Willamette Valley Vineyards 2008 Founders' Reserve Pinot Noir (Willamette Valley); \$35. Firm and slightly chewy, this interesting wine brings brambly berries, dried herbs, forest floor and light mushroom flavors together in a well-crafted, well-balanced effort. The alcohol is just over 13%, and the style is classic Oregon. —P.G.

89 ArborBrook Vineyards 2008 Heritage Cuvée Pinot Noir (Willamette Valley); \$35. A sexy nose with soft, pretty plum and cherry fruit leads into a

well-rounded, satiny wine that coats the tongue like a velvet glove. The fruit is the star here—ripe strawberries and cherry candy—with a touch of sweetness and a lick of chocolate at the very end. —P.G.

89 Bethel Heights 2008 Flat Block Estate Pinot Noir (Eola-Amity Hills); \$NA. Lovely aromatics mix floral, fruit and barrel components in equal proportion. The wine has some solid tannins, and sits in the mouth with a bit of gravitas. Wild cherry, raspberry, fresh herb, and a little stiffness to the finish. Definitely a wine to age a few more years. —P.G.

89 Erath 2008 Estate Selection Pinot Noir (Willamette Valley); \$36. Very soft and smooth—like a Michel Rolland version of a Pinot Noir. The berry/cherry flavors are velvety and clean, the tannins supple, the palate seamless. The tang to the finish, showing some unintegrated acids, is the only jarring note. —P.G.

89 Hawks View 2008 Pinot Noir (Chehalem Mountains); \$35. Medium weight, round and tangy, this shows a core of cranberry/cherry fruit, a whiff of cola and a suggestion of the tack room. It's a detailed and somewhat earthy Pinot Noir. From the estate vineyard, it's what you hope to find in Oregon—Pinot that is artisanal, a little quirky, distinctive and above all, enjoyable. Fades just a bit too quickly. —P.G.

89 I'M 2007 Pinot Noir (Willamette Valley); \$35. Michael Mondavi's Folio Fine Wine Partners now offers an Oregon Pinot Noir, this one vinified by Rob Mondavi, a fourth-generation winemaker. Pale and elegantly styled, it shows refined winemaking skills and a European sensibility. Pungently herbal, this supple wine brings young fruit flavors of cranberry and raspberry, but shows age-worthy depth and persistence. It's the sort of subtle, classic style that rewards both time and attention. —P.G.

89 Redhawk 2008 Patacolli Family Vineyard Pinot Noir (Eola-Amity Hills); \$35. Just four barrels were made, with grapes from a one-acre estate block of Pommard clone Pinot Noir planted more than 30 years ago. Detailed and brambly, with strawberry and cherry fruit, mottled with baking spices and chocolate. The finish carries some brown sugar flavors, a hint that perhaps this wine will age

rather quickly and should be consumed over the next couple of years. —P.G.

89 Sokol Blosser 2008 Big Tree Block Pinot Noir (Dundee Hills); \$60. Tight, with a mix of berry, spice and a hint of Band-Aid. This needs decanting to show well; it's short and compact, concealing its flavors. Some cherry fruit and barrel flavors of chocolate and cinnamon, but this needs a lot more bottle age, or lengthy decanting. —P.G.

89 Soléna 2008 Grande Cuvée Pinot Noir (Willamette Valley); \$25. Compiled from a half dozen vineyards scattered throughout the northern Willamette Valley. Firm, sculpted and dense, this has more grip and depth than might be expected at this price point. Each vineyard's grapes were separately fermented; the blending has pulled them all together with dark, plummy flavors, notes of raisin, baking spices and caramel, and a smooth, penetrating finish. —P.G.

89 Soléna 2008 Hyland Vineyard Pinot Noir (McMinnville); \$50. From the heart of Pinot Noir country, this iconic vineyard, originally planted in the 1970s, yields concentrated flavors of black cherry, root beer, incense and peppermint. Tart, juicy and quite young, this finishes with leaf and herb-infused tannins. —P.G.

89 William Hatcher 2007 Pinot Noir (Willamette Valley); \$48. A little extra bottle age has helped this wine soften up, but it still seems to stop a bit short. The entry is firm and shows some Oregon herbal character, along with tart, wild berry and light baking spices. There is a vague hint of barnyard as well. The tannins are beginning to smooth out, and this can probably benefit from a few more years in the cellar. —P.G.

88 Airlie 2008 BeckenRidge Vineyard Pinot Noir (Willamette Valley); \$35. The first BeckenRidge bottling since 2001, sourced from a vineyard planted in 1978. Fruit flavors are round and supple, a soft mix of cherry and plum, with herbs and earth flavors framing them. The wine fades gently, clean and delicate, with a finishing note of cinnamon. —P.G.

88 Anam Cara 2008 Nicholas Estate Reserve Pinot Noir (Chehalem Mountains); \$40. A funky undertone, similar to the Nicholas Estate bottling, weaves through

the wine, along with a mix of cranberry, raspberry and sour cherry fruit. Despite the 14% alcohol, this wine seems light, delicate, the flavors pleasing but pale, and the finish a gentle fade. —P.G.

88 Anne Amie 2008 Pinot Noir (Willamette Valley); \$35. Similar in style to the winery's Cuvée A bottling, this had a little higher percentage of new French oak (still just one quarter total), and brings an earthier style to bear. The cherry fruit has scents and subtle flavors of compost and barnyard, with ripe but chewy tannins. —P.G.

88 Erath 2008 Leland Pinot Noir (Willamette Valley); \$50. Cranberry fruit, with pungent clove accents, sets up this spicy, assertive Pinot Noir. What appear to be strong barrel flavors include vanilla and caramel along with coffee and clove. The fruit is tart and smooth, but the barrel flavors are not yet entirely integrated. —P.G.

88 Erath 2008 Prince Hill 777 Pinot Noir (Dundee Hills); \$50. A single clone selection from this vineyard, this has a high-toned pungency that captures your attention. Flavors of tea and wild cherry, mixed in with hints of volatility, give the wine lift and life. As a stand-alone wine it is incomplete, but captivating. It needs a finish. —P.G.

88 Erath 2008 Knight's Gambit Pinot Noir (Dundee Hills); \$47. Tight and bright, with sharp acidity, the Knight's Gambit bottling shows tangy raspberry fruit, juicy and primary. You might be tasting right out of the barrel; it's that young and fresh. Let it air out if you want to put some flesh on it. —P.G.

88 Lange 2009 Pinot Noir (Willamette Valley); \$22. Lange produces a wide range of Pinots, including an estate bottling, a reserve bottling and various single-vineyard cuvées. This is the most basic and affordable, and offers solid, quaffable fruit flavors of cranberry and raspberry, buoyed by firm acids. Just a hint of tomato comes through, along with spicy pine resin. Despite its youth, it is drinking nicely and already beginning to soften up. —P.G.

88 Libra 2008 Pinot Noir (Willamette Valley); \$20. A side project from Panther Creek's winemaker, Libra's affordably priced Willamette Valley Pinot Noir is dark, aromatic and surprisingly concentrated. Black-

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berries and black cherry fruit, with a splash of cola, continues into a midpalate plush with pepper, moist earth and a hint of nectarine. It's front loaded, full-bodied and drinking well right now. —P.G.

88 Panther Creek 2008 Winemaker's Cuvée Pinot Noir (Willamette Valley); \$30. Tart cranberry fruit, mixed with wild strawberries and some woody, leafy notes, anchor this multivineyard blend. Firm and spicy, it's well balanced and medium weight, and should continue to improve for several years a cellar for up to a decade. —P.G.

88 Panther Creek 2007 Shea Vineyard Pinot Noir (Yamhill County); \$40. Fullbodied and detailed, the Shea vineyard bottling mingles fresh strawberry and sour cherry fruit in a tart, clean, bracing Pinot Noir. It's balanced and fresh, with particular appeal to those who prefer a racy, acidic style. —P.G.

88 Plowbuster 2009 Pinot Noir (Willamette Valley); \$20. Made by Carabella, this popular budget Pinot sports solid, country flavors. Plenty of bright, vivid and tart fruit—berries and cherries—give it a full-bodied, forward expression. But it's not all front-loaded; there is surprising depth, and overall a fine balance. —P.G.

88 Redhawk 2008 Pinot Noir (Willamette Valley); \$18. With each bump up in price, the winemaker ups the percentage of new oak; here it's 25%. Half the fruit is estate grown, and this light, clean, well-balanced wine drinks like a village Burgundy, with the right hint of herb around the tart red fruit. —P.G.

88 Sokol Blosser 2008 Pinot Noir (Dundee Hills); \$38. Full-bodied, firm, fruit with cranberry and highlights of cranberry and chocolate. There's plenty of acid, sharp edged at first, slowly softening a bit with light, slightly watery, edges. —P.G.

88 WildAire Cellars 2008 Reserve Pinot Noir (Willamette Valley); \$38. The percentage of new oak in WildAire's reserve bottling is upped from one-fifth to one-third of the barrels, and overall it has more weight to the fruit than the companion 2008 Timothy Pinot Noir. They are well-matched in other respects, with tart cranberry/cherry fruit, and

here a dash of vanilla cream and a hint of banana. —P.G.

88 Willamette Valley Vineyards 2008 Tualatin Estate Pinot Noir (Willamette Valley); \$45. This northern vineyard location delivers more herb and pine needle character than warm fruits, but you'll find elegantly defined cranberry and sour cherry mingling with leaf and cinnamon. It's not exactly delicate, but it is crafted for nuance more than power. —P.G.

87 Anam Cara 2008 Nicholas Estate Pinot Noir (Chehalem Mountains); \$30. The aromas bring a noticeable funk along with the fruit, which seems to be muted by the leathery components. For some tasters this is character, for others it suggests a bit of Brett. Soft flavors of red berry and cherry continue into a lightly chocolatey finish. —P.G.

87 Anne Amie 2008 Cuvée A Pinot Noir (Willamette Valley); \$25. This moderately-priced Pinot Noir spent 10 months in mostly neutral French oak. Still quite young, it reveals primary fruit flavors of red apple, red pear and raspberry. Firm and juicy, with just a hint of toast. —P.G.

87 Benton-Lane 2008 First Class Pinot Noir (Willamette Valley); \$60. This limited-reserve bottling captures pretty cherry fruit, opens well, holds firm and then fades. It has a little more fruit and more polished tannins than the regular estate. —P.G.

87 Erath 2008 Battle Creek Pinot Noir (Willamette Valley); \$47. Very good juice, but as with many of the seemingly endless single-vineyard Pinots from Erath, you can't help but wonder what might happen if some real blending took place? Cranberry and raspberry fruit, young and sharp, has not yet integrated to chocolaty barrel flavors. It's a wine split down the middle, with a chalky finish. —P.G.

87 Erath 2008 Prince Hill 115 Pinot Noir (Dundee Hills); \$50. A single-clone selection from this vineyard; it's like a pencil drawing, a sketch for a complete wine. Sharp edges, tight lines, a quick burst of pomegranate, earthy tannins and it stops, a hard finish. —P.G.

87 Genius Loci 2008 Pinot Noir (Willamette Valley); \$20. Sharp and

showing a hint of bitterness, this kicks in with midpalate flavors of red plum and cherry. There's some mint and vanilla evident from the 16 months in barrel, and for the price it delivers a lot of spicy, penetrating flavor. —P.G.

87 Libra 2008 Mystic Vineyard Pinot Noir (Eola-Amity Hills); \$25. Much like its Willamette Valley stablemate, this is a dark, aromatic Pinot Noir, with fruit flavors of cranberry and raspberry. It's solid and a bit blocky, but full in the mouth, and there is an unusual set of spices—clove and jalapeño pepper to be exact. An interesting bottle, a bit off the beaten track. —P.G.

87 Panther Creek 2008 Temperance Hill Pinot Noir (Eola-Amity Hills); \$40. Clean and fruity, this 2008 vintage drinks more like a 2007—light, elegant, with tart, strawberry fruit flavors. It's pleasant but ethereal; a little more concentration would be a plus. —P.G.

87 Panther Creek 2007 Vista Hills Vineyard Pinot Noir (Dundee Hills); \$40. This excellent Dundee Hills vineyard supports a well-made, rather delicate wine, reflective of the lighter 2007 vintage. Strawberry fruit and tea-flavored tannins combine in a balanced, lightly tart, fairly simple Pinot Noir. —P.G.

87 Redhawk 2008 Grateful Red Pinot Noir (Willamette Valley); \$15. A good effort at this price, this tart and tasty Pinot mixes cranberry and sour cherry fruit with plenty of juicy acidity. Ten percent was aged in new French oak, and you can pick up just a lick of chocolate as the finish fades. —P.G.

87 RouteStock Cellars 2009 99W Pinot Noir (Willamette Valley); \$19. Another new entry into the under-\$20 Oregon Pinot ranks, this one from Wilson Daniels. Oregon law requires that wines with varietal labeling be 95% the named varietal; here there is 3% Syrah in the cuvée. Tart red berries, leaf and herb mingle in a graceful, though light bottle. A nice balance of fruit, herb, acid and tannin, with a pleasing spicy finish. —P.G.

87 Soléna 2008 Guadalupe Vineyard Pinot Noir (Yamhill-Carlton District); \$40. Fragrant and soft, this wine carries a gentle floral fragrance—crushed roses—into a midpalate of bright raspberry and cherry. It turns a little leathery in the mouth, astringent but

with the cherry flavors persisting, suggesting that further bottle age will soften it and add more textural complexity. —P.G.

87 WildAire Cellars 2008 Timothy Pinot Noir (Willamette Valley); \$20. This inexpensive, screw capped, light and elegant Pinot Noir brings a mix of very tart cherry fruit, fresh herbs, and bracing acidity. It might be considered an Oregon take on a simple (but well made) Bourgogne. —P.G.

87 Zimri Cellars 2007 La Colina Vineyard Pinot Noir (Dundee Hills); \$25. Light and pretty, with strawberry fruit sporting a spicy top. This is carefully made, pleasing and varietal, and does not push too hard. Tannins could soften up a bit with a little more bottle age. —P.G.

86 Airlie 2008 Pinot Noir (Willamette Valley); \$18. A splash of tart cherry introduces this charming Pinot Noir, which resemble a country wine from the nether reaches of Burgundy. The alcohol does not touch 13%, yet the flavors are here, with tart berries, a bit of stem, sharp tannins, and a medium-long finish. A great quaffer. —P.G.

86 Artisanal Wine Cellars 2007 Adams Vineyard Reserve Pinot Noir (Chehalem Mountains); \$38. The scent carries light suggestions of cured meat, along with tangy berries. Sharp-edged and tight, this needs decanting to fill out the finish. —P.G.

86 Benton-Lane 2008 Estate Pinot Noir (Willamette Valley); \$26. Spicy cranberry/raspberry fruit is the whole story here. It's fresh, acidic, forward and spicy, then tails off quickly into a tannic finish. The last impression is of earth and stems, slightly bitter and astringent. —P.G.

86 Clawson Creek 2008 Angela Pinot Noir (Oregon); \$50. Soft, round and pretty, this wine announces itself with a massive, deeply punted bottle. It's a pleasant effort, with tart red fruit, piercing acidity, and a lackluster, lightly herbal finish. —P.G.

86 Erath 2008 Prince Hill Pinot Noir (Dundee Hills); \$45. This is an unusually buttery wine, as if it had been put through some special sort of malolactic fermentation. It feels manipulated, softened and buttered up,

with the fruit subdued. Traces of herb remain, but they are like shadows on the wall. Perhaps the house style does not accommodate this particular vineyard's character. This wine makes it hard to know. —P.G.

86 Melrose 2008 Pinot Noir (Umpqua Valley); \$18. Round and fruity, this mixes berries and hints of tropical fruit. Acids are just enough, and there is little or no trace of a new barrel. Quaffable and light. —P.G.

86 Panther Creek 2007 Verde Vineyards Pinot Noir (Willamette Valley); \$35. Don't be confused by the name; this is a blend of fruit from three different sites, united by their "green" farming practices—hence the name and the green label, that sets it apart from the rest of the Panther Creek lineup. Earthy and infused with composted, organic flavors, this herbal, leafy Pinot Noir comes across as a little rough and tumble, but interesting. —P.G.

86 Willamette Valley Vineyards 2008 Pinot Noir (Willamette Valley); \$28. Still young and tart, with sharp acids, this Pinot shows cranberry and raspberry fruit, a coating of milk chocolate, and a finish that is an uneasy mix of acid, stem and earthy tannins. Nothing has settled into a seamless whole; it's a collection of parts that needs more bottle time. —P.G.

85 Anindor 2007 Pinot Noir (Umpqua Valley); \$19. Simply looking at the color you might take this for a 20-year-old wine; it's that mature brick color that old Pinot takes on. Very soft and light, it tastes much older too, with hints of brown sugar and raisin, and no trace of primary fruit or tannin. If you like well-aged Pinot Noir, this is ready to go. —P.G.

85 Artisanal Wine Cellars 2008 Pinot Noir (Willamette Valley); \$20. Earthy upon entry, with sub-notes suggesting some stem contact and slightly green tannins. Tart and spicy, with wild berry and pomegranate fruit, in a firmly focused, if short, wine. —P.G.

85 Artisanal Wine Cellars 2008 Adams Vineyard Pinot Noir (Chehalem Mountains); \$28. This vineyard select Pinot Noir shows some chocolate flavors around thin, sharp red berry fruit. The oak influence dominates, along with an earthy, tannic finish. —P.G.

85 Castle Rock 2009 Pinot Noir (Willamette Valley); \$14. Another entry into the under-\$15 Oregon Pinot category, that has become rather crowded in the past year. This is a stiff, tannic wine, still knitting itself together, with vanilla cream-infused strawberry fruit, that only partially masks rather green, herbal tannins. —P.G.

85 King Estate 2009 Signature Collection Pinot Noir (Oregon); \$29. There is an herbal scent here, along with a slight whiff suggesting overripe, past-its-prime fruit. In the mouth the flavors are light, almost watery, with pale cherry, cranberry and raspberry notes. Not much if any barrel to-ast, but good balance of tannins and acids. —P.G.

85 Macindoe 2008 Pinot Noir (Willamette Valley); \$24. Strawberry and raspberry fruit enter brightly, then quickly fall flat in the mouth. The wine is sound, but somehow lifeless, with a soft, quick fade. —P.G.

85 Macindoe 2008 Pinot Noir (Eola-Amity Hills); \$28. Similar to Macindoe's Willamette Valley bottling, this shows light berry flavors and a hint of chocolate, then fades quickly into a flat finish. —P.G.

85 Underwood Cellars 2009 Pinot Noir (Oregon); \$13. Loaded with bright raspberry fruit, a little on the soda pop side, but perfectly quaffable, and best served chilled. It would be an interesting side-by-side with a Beaujolais Nouveau. —P.G.

84 3Fools 2008 Fools Gold Pinot Noir (Willamette Valley); \$22. Very light, this is scented with fresh bread dough and shows a cherry soda pop flavor. Pretty, light and simple on entry, it feels stripped of depth and disappears quickly in the mouth. —P.G.

84 Cubanismo 2008 Vendemia Vineyard Reserve Pinot Noir (Willamette Valley); \$42. Very light and delicate, despite the garnet color, this is sharply acidic—too much for the ephemeral fruit. There are floral notes and some pretty cherry accents, then it turns hard and bitter in the finish. —P.G.

84 Cultivé Cellars 2008 Pinot Noir (Dundee Hills); \$35. Very pale, thin and watery. The fruit is barely perceptible, a little

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watermelon and unripe strawberry. The tannins, too, are light, with a breakfast tea flavor. —P.G.

84 J. Daan 2008 Pinot Noir (Willamette Valley); \$20. A first whiff suggests rather dank scents of moist, subterranean earth. In the mouth it turns candied, like a cherry soda. The two components do not seem to fit together, and the acids linger through a chalky finish. —P.G.

83 Artisanal Wine Cellars 2008 Jubilee Vineyard Pinot Noir (Willamette Valley); \$28. This young wine has not come into focus; it feels off center and disjointed. Components include a mix of sour red fruit, which drops off quickly, and leaves a tart, chalky aftertaste. —P.G.

81 Cubanísimo 2008 Pinot Noir (Willamette Valley); \$19. Cherry and smoke, with a burnt rubber edge. In the mouth it is thin and watery, diffuse and flat. —P.G.

SYRAH

91 Abacela 2007 Estate Syrah (Umpqua Valley); \$30. Cofermented with about 3% Viognier, this estate-grown Syrah is done in a style quite different from anywhere else on the West Coast. It's racy and almost delicate, with none of the jammy fruit of California or the funk of Washington. But what it does have is grace and detail—starting with plums and cherries and bringing in loads of spice and chocolate, hints of coffee grounds and a whiff of tobacco. It's all elegantly displayed, lingering and polished, with surprising length. —P.G.

88 Abacela 2008 Syrah (Southern Oregon); \$19. The aromas indicate a mix of ripe and less ripe fruit—some fig and date scents, some herb and bark scents. In the mouth it comes together, with those flavors sharply delineated by stiff acids. A gentle wash of chocolate sparks the finish. —P.G.

88 Melrose 2008 Syrah (Umpqua Valley); \$20. Cofermented with 3% Viognier, this distinctive Syrah just skirts the edge of ripeness. It brings cranberry and pomegranate fruit flavors, etched with licorice and mint and coffee beans, supported by firm acids. There's a nice balance and penetrating fruit that gives the finish some length and interest. —P.G.

87 Nuthatch Cellars 2007 Syrah (Walla Walla); \$32. Tight and unyielding, with a dominating Band-Aid streak that does not disappear even after many hours of breathing time. There is some Walla Walla Syrah berry and loam character evident, and the vineyards are first rate (Seven Hills and Pepper Bridge), but the reductive, plastic flavor masks much of the fruit. —P.G.

86 Genius Loci 2007 Folin Vineyard Syrah (Rogue Valley); \$25. Firm, tannic and tight, this wraps its cherry fruit in a lot of coffee and toast from the barrel aging. After that, it does a gentle fade, with some residual acidity. —P.G.

84 Del Rio Vineyards 2008 Syrah (Rogue Valley); \$35. This is straightforward Syrah, tannic and dusty. The fruit suggests black cherry and the barrels bring in licorice, there is an underlying earthiness to the mouthfeel as well. But the overall impression is one dimensional, without the sweetness of California fruit or the funk of Washington Syrah. —P.G.

TEMPRANILLO

90 Abacela 2007 Estate Tempranillo (Umpqua Valley); \$35. This deceptive wine looks almost Pinot-like in color, but packs a myriad of flavors into its compact and raw frame. Rose petals, pomegranate, sour cherry, hints of cumin and nutmeg—it just keeps on going. Tannins are beautifully polished and the wine slowly unfolds, adding layers of flavor. Should improve for six to eight years and cellar for even longer. *Cellar Selection.* —P.G.

88 Abacela 2008 Tempranillo (Southern Oregon); \$20. A portion of this is estate grown, the rest sourced from neighboring southern Oregon vineyards. Harvested at just 24 brix, it's an elegant style, with plenty of tart wild berry flavors, and alcohol under 14%. Just a bare hint of new oak adds a nice toasty note to a black cherry finish. *Editors' Choice.* —P.G.

86 Melrose 2008 Tempranillo (Umpqua Valley); \$24. Very tart and acidic, this shows cranberry fruit flavors and the barest suggestion of cured meat. Fruit-powered, sharp and quite young, this might substitute for a cru Beaujolais more than something from Spain. —P.G.

OTHER RED WINES

89 Nuthatch Cellars 2008 Hogback Ridge Vineyard Malbec (Columbia Valley); \$30. Nicely balanced and detailed, this Malbec includes small amounts of Cab Franc and Syrah. Tangy raspberry and spicy strawberry jam fruit flavors are dusted with toast and cracker notes. The wine spent 18 months in half new, half neutral oak barrels. —P.G.

86 Cultivé Cellars 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (Rogue Valley); \$25. Sharp, herbal and varietal, with a deep rose color. Strawberry and Bing cherry fruit shines here, but the tannins take over in the finish. Some further bottle age may help to smooth it out. —P.G.

86 Melrose 2008 Equinox (Umpqua Valley); \$20. The blend is half Dolcetto, 40% Baco Noir, and the rest a mix of Tempranillo and Syrah. Creative, to be sure. What emerges is a rustic, fruity, forward, simple and slightly gamy red, the sort of wine that might be served in a carafe in a Mediterranean cafe. Light and fruity, with a spicy kick to the finish. —P.G.

86 Zimri Cellars 2008 Merlot (Umpqua Valley); \$30. A fruity, black cherry nose is accented with leather and forest floor scents. The flavors follow, with smoke and licorice wrapped into the black fruits. Tannins show black tea and a hint of bitterness. —P.G.

85 Melrose 2008 Merlot (Umpqua Valley); \$20. Fruity and tart, with cranberry and not quite ripe wild blackberry flavors. The acidity is front and center here, the fruit second, and the wine fades away with no additional complexity in the finish. A pleasant, fruity, no-frills red. —P.G.

83 Purple Hands Winery 2008 Red (Oregon); \$18. A Pinot-Syrah-Merlot blend that doesn't really go anywhere. It's stiff and herbal, stemmy and tannic, with no resolution of the various varietal fruit flavors. Red, tart and tannic. —P.G.

ROSÉ WINE

82 Cubanísimo 2009 Rosado de Pinot Noir (Willamette Valley); \$18. Sweet, almost syrupy strawberry scents suggest

that this will be off dry, but it is not. It does seem as if the fruit was late-picked, at least for a rosé, and it has a slightly rancid aftertaste. —P.G.

OREGON WHITE WINES

PINOT GRIS

92 ArborBrook Vineyards 2009 Croft Vineyard Pinot Gris (Willamette Valley); \$18. Bright and spicy, this is Pinot Gris with a bit of the grassy bite of a Loire Valley Sauvignon Blanc. Racy and loaded with grapefruit and pineapple flavors, this lingers lazily through a refreshing, acid-driven finish that invites further sipping. *Editors' Choice.* —P.G.

91 Rex Hill 2008 Reserve Pinot Gris (Willamette Valley); \$28. Balanced and fresh, with a mix of pear, quince, melon and apple, lightly dusted with baking spices, this appealing Pinot Gris is a fine match for salmon, halibut, and other Northwest seafood. Textural, laced with refreshing minerality, and persistent into a long finish, this is Oregon PG at its best. *Editors' Choice.* —P.G.

90 Anindor 2009 Pinot Gris (Umpqua Valley); \$16. This estate-bottled Pinot Gris, from a vineyard planted in 1983, shows some definite residual sugar, despite its alcohol rating of 14.4%. Plenty ripe all right, and plenty tasty, too. This has the body and balance to match up with a fat cut of salmon, perhaps in a semi-sweet tamari sauce, or a grilled pork roast with a fruit dressing. *Editors' Choice.* —P.G.

90 Hawks View 2009 Pinot Gris (Chehalem Mountains); \$24. Estate grown, crisp and nicely defined, with a pretty mix of apple, pear, peach and apricot flavors. The fruit is framed with citrus rind (orange and grapefruit) and keeps the wine tight and focused through a clean, lingering finish. —P.G.

90 Left Coast Cellars 2008 The Orchards Pinot Gris (Willamette Valley); \$18. This wine immediately wows the palate, bursting into full flavor with an explosion of apple and pear fruit. There's a light yeastiness as well, just enough to suggest a young, fresh, exuberant wine, and it simply grabs hold of your taste buds and never lets go. *Editors' Choice.* —P.G.

88 Carabella 2008 Pinot Gris (Chehalem Mountains); \$16. A very tasty wine, loaded with fleshy, fruity flavor. The dominant note is fresh cut pear, dappled with cinnamon spice. Round and balanced, it's a delicious bottle with just a slight hint of residual sweetness. —P.G.

88 Lumos 2009 Rudolfo Vineyard Pinot Gris (Willamette Valley); \$17. An interesting wine, somewhat sharp and yeasty upon entry, but also showing a creamy, textural midpalate with a streak of honey down the fruit flavors of pear and apple. It's dry, persistent, and distinctive, though not typical for Oregon Pinot Gris. —P.G.

88 Soléna 2009 Pinot Gris (Oregon); \$20. Full-bodied, fruity and loaded with ripe peach and pear flavors, this lively and refreshing wine is drinking beautifully. There's a bit of fruit sweetness set against the natural acidity, keeping the wine poised and balanced. —P.G.

86 Airlie 2008 Pinot Gris (Willamette Valley); \$12. With alcohol of just 12% the suspicion is that this wine has significant residual sugar; but once you taste it, you realize it's actually finished dry. Despite the delicate fruit flavors—melon and white grape—it does not seem underripe; it's quite Euro in style, and delightful as an apéritif. —P.G.

86 Redhawk 2009 Pinot Gris (Eola-Amity Hills); \$12. This affordable Pinot Gris seems to have a little residual sugar; the flavors are rounded out with a hint of sweetness, much like a California Chardonnay. The spicy pear fruit is full-bodied and varietally correct. Not a complex wine, but fine for everyday enjoyment. —P.G.

84 Castle Rock 2009 Pinot Gris (Willamette Valley); \$14. Firm and fleshy, with sharply accented tart fruit and other scents and flavors that suggest pungent pine needles, diesel and catbox. It would seem that there is a fair amount of Sauvignon Blanc in here, but apparently not. —P.G.

84 Willamette Valley Vineyards 2009 Pinot Gris (Willamette Valley); \$15. Simple pear and vanilla flavors fill a thick, blocky midpalate. There's no lift to the flavors; they are clean but not fresh, fruity but without any zip. Perhaps just a dull bottle? —P.G.

83 Del Rio Vineyards 2009 Estate Reserve Pinot Gris (Rogue Valley); \$26. The first impression is of Bosc pear, quickly followed with an aftertaste of some sort of chalky cardboard. There's a sweaty, plastic note lingering in the finish; something is just a little off. —P.G.

CHARDONNAY

91 Willamette Valley Vineyards 2008 Estate Chardonnay (Willamette Valley); \$30. A great success in 2008, this compelling Chardonnay offers concentrated, dense fruit flavors of lemon curd and sweet pineapple, along with streaks of vanilla cookie. Nuances reveal themselves through a lingering finish; fresh herb and hints of rock. *Editors' Choice.* —P.G.

90 Amalie Robert 2009 Her Silhouette Chardonnay (Willamette Valley); \$22. Tart and slender, this is deceptive; at first it seems a little thin, but as it opens in the glass into a succulent, well-defined, racy wine with citrus and peach, mineral and herb. It's not delicate, but its muscularity is concealed behind elegant styling. *Editors' Choice.* —P.G.

90 David Hill 2009 Estate Unoaked Chardonnay (Willamette Valley); \$15. Citrus and honeydew fruit flavors anchor this unoaked Chardonnay. It has a wonderful leesy texture that enlivens the palate, giving the impression of limestone, or at least lime pulp. Flavors linger, clean and utterly refreshing. *Best Buy.* —P.G.

88 Panther Creek 2008 Elton Vineyard Chardonnay (Eola-Amity Hills); \$20. Tangy and pleasantly round upon entry, this mingles fresh apple and peach fruit with baking spice highlights. There is a full midpalate, fruit-driven and flavorful, that gracefully tails off into a tart and juicy finish. —P.G.

88 Zimri Cellars 2008 Chardonnay (Willamette Valley); \$18. Bright, fruity and spicy, this palate-lifting effort brings flavors of pineapple, pink grapefruit and melon. Lightly spicy, balanced and showing a little toast around the edges. —P.G.

RIESLING

94 Trisaetum 2009 Josahn Riesling (Willamette Valley); \$24. A dry wine, companion to the winery's off-dry estate bottling. This does not give up its fruit as some dry Rieslings do; there is a pleasing mix of lemon, grapefruit, pineapple and apricot, full in the mid-palate, then turning more astringent and cheerily tart in the finish. This is very young, compact, and still tight as a drum; it could be cellared for up to a decade. *Cellar Selection.* —P.G.

93 Trisaetum 2009 Estate Riesling (Willamette Valley); \$24. This gorgeous new release, from a young winery with a Riesling focus, is resplendent with an enticing mix of flowers, fruits and stone. The scents well up from the glass and the flavors fill the mouth with a lively zest, pulling together streaks of lemon, lime, nectarine and apricot, accented with citrus rind and wet rock, honey and lemon tea. *Editors' Choice.* —P.G.

90 Anam Cara 2009 Nicholas Estate Riesling (Chehalem Mountains); \$19. This gentle, lightly off-dry Riesling was fermented primarily in neutral oak, which seems to have softened the entry without impacting the flavors. Aromatic highlights of honeysuckle and orange marmalade introduce a full palate with a complex fruit mix including raspberry, citrus and orange. The finish brings an impression of cotton candy. —P.G.

89 Kings Ridge 2009 Riesling (Oregon); \$12. Always one of the finest values in Oregon Riesling, the Kings Ridge really shines in 2009. Juicy and bursting with ripe pineapple, pear and peach fruit, this big, round, luscious wine masks its residual sugar with tangy acidity. *Best Buy.* —P.G.

87 A to Z 2009 Riesling (Oregon); \$18. With alcohol at just 11.5% and a flowery new label, this is a complete makeover from the 2008 A to Z Riesling. The fruit is back, along with lemon and orange peel, honey and tea. Broad, bracing and slightly chalky acids keep the sugar in check. —P.G.

86 A to Z 2008 Riesling (Oregon); \$12. This dry Riesling has a steely spine running right through the heart of the wine; you can almost taste the metal. It defines and con-

finer the flavors; the fruit seems like an afterthought. That said, it might just be the perfect wine to try with fresh oysters, firm and lightly lemony with a hint of brine. —P.G.

85 Airlie 2009 Riesling (Willamette Valley); \$12. This drinks much drier than its 12.3% alcohol and 1.5% residual sugar would indicate. It tastes of cold steel and musty cardboard around the edges, but with some good peach and apple fruit flavor in the core. Somewhat reminiscent of an Australian style, it is a food wine rather than a sipping wine. —P.G.

85 Willamette Valley Vineyards 2009 Riesling (Willamette Valley); \$12. Sweet and light, just 10% alcohol, it's close to a late harvest dessert wine. There is just enough acidity to keep it on the dinner table, with spicy noodle dishes perhaps. Sugary and simple, with a cardboard flavor running through the finish. —P.G.

GEWÜRZTRAMINER

88 Airlie 2007 Dry Gewürztraminer (Willamette Valley); \$12. With a hint of blush in the color and a scent of rose petals in the nose, this aromatic and flavorful Gewürztraminer invites contemplation. It's got some strong pine needle flavors along with light citrus and apple fruit, but the more interesting elements are the floral/soapy harmonics that dance along the edges. *Best Buy.* —P.G.

87 Lumos 2009 Temperance Hill Vineyard Gewürztraminer (Willamette Valley); \$19. Stainless-steel fermentation yields a tangy, ripe, tart, tongue-tickling Gewürztraminer with exceptional minerality. The echoing varietal flavors of flower and rosewater add interest to the finish. Still a bit yeasty, but should improve with a little more bottle age. —P.G.

85 3Fools 2009 Fool Overruled Gewürztraminer (Willamette Valley); \$12. Dry and dusty, with an unusual mix of scents that suggest lemon polish, cantaloupe and spun sugar. Soft and spicy, it quickly tails off into a faded finish. —P.G.

VIOGNIER

93 Cowhorn 2009 Viognier (Applegate Valley); \$30. This small, family-owned, biodynamically farmed vineyard and winery is quickly becoming a southern Oregon cult producer. Certainly one of the finest Viogniers produced anywhere in the Northwest, this extraordinarily aromatic wine showers the palate with luscious and tangy lemon, pineapple, Satsuma orange and pear fruit flavors. Then the spices pile on, lending an exotic twist to a lengthy midpalate, and leading into a lightly toasty finish. *Editors' Choice.* —P.G.

88 Amalie Robert 2009 Our Muse Viognier (Willamette Valley); \$30. Fragrant and sharp edged, with citrus rind flavors, and a hint of bitterness around the tight fruit flavors. As it breathes, pretty, concentrated fruit flavors emerge, suggesting marmalade and apricot preserves. It finishes with a light touch, tart and bracing. —P.G.

85 Del Rio Vineyards 2009 Viognier (Rogue Valley); \$20. Firm and sappy, with varietally true peach and apricot fruit flavor. Turns a little syrupy in the follow through, giving it a canned peaches impression in the aftertaste. —P.G.

OTHER WHITE WINES

91 Erath 2009 Quail Run Pinot Blanc (Southern Oregon); \$22. A rich, woody style of Pinot Blanc, the barrel toast wrapped around superripe tropical fruit flavors of banana, papaya and pineapple, with a hint of grapefruity acids. This is flat-out delicious, and could easily pass for an expensive Chardonnay. *Editors' Choice.* —P.G.

89 Left Coast Cellars 2008 Left Bank Pinot Blanc (Willamette Valley); \$21. Much like the winery's Pinot Gris, this estate-grown Pinot Blanc is built around mineral-infused fruit that is immaculately clean and vividly refreshing. Tart and juicy, with Asian pear, green apple, and lemon/lime acidity. —P.G.

87 Airlie 2009 Seven (Willamette Valley); \$12. Crisp and fresh, this appealing white blend brings some floral and tea scents and flavors into a mix of pear, apple and white

peach. An light touch sweetness is off-set by the juicy acidity; the alcohol clocks in at 12.2%. **Best Buy.** —P.G.

86 Macindoe 2009 Roussanne (Columbia Valley); \$18. Clean and peachy, this forward, fruity effort nicely captures the varietal fruit flavor. It holds steady in the mouth, a bit one dimensional, with good viscosity and persistence. The finish feels a little flat. —P.G.

85 Macindoe 2009 Melon de Bourgogne (Yamhill-Carlton District); \$18. This is supposedly the same grape that makes French Muscadet, though its place in Oregon history remains a bit muddled. This has flavors that map to that wine, however: high acid, green apple and some textural minerality. —P.G.

ARGENTINA RED WINES

MALBEC

93 Bodega Catena Zapata 2007 Catena Alta Malbec (Mendoza); \$50. One sniff tells you plenty: there's attractive spice, coffee and leather to go with rich molasses and broad black-fruit aromas. The palate maintains balance due to fine, fresh acidity, and the flavor profile brings mocha, coffee, berry, plum and toast. Delicious, deep, layered and refined. Will age for at least 5–6 years, but best from 2012–2014. Imported by Winebow. **Cellar Selection.** —M.S.

92 Tomero 2007 Gran Reserva Malbec (Mendoza); \$50. Robust, deep and candied on the nose, with rooty richness, medicinal notes and complexity. The palate is smooth, meaty, healthy and suave, with lush black fruit, prune and earthy flavors. Long, likable and showing a lot of depth and structure. Drink now through 2014. Imported by San Francisco Wine Exchange. —M.S.

91 Achaval-Ferrer 2008 Finca Bella Vista Malbec (Mendoza); \$120. Bella Vista is the richest, most dense of A-F's three single-vineyard Malbecs. It opens with leather, smoke, blueberry and floral aromas. Next in line is a chewy, dark palate of wild berry and earthy fruit flavors. Clean on the finish with a bit less acidity than its brothers, Altamira and

Mirador. Drink now through 2015. Imported by T.G.I.C. Importers.

91 Colomé 2007 Reserva Malbec (Calchaqui Valley); \$90. Big, dark, sweet and jammy on the nose, with earthy, candied, sweet aromas of ripe blackberry and herbs. The palate delivers bouncy, showy acidity, while the flavors of black cherry, dark plum and chocolate are solid and rewarding. A little prune on deeper inspection, with a leathery quality to the wine's depth. Drink now through 2013. Imported by Hess Collection. —M.S.

90 Bodega Catena Zapata 2008 Malbec (Mendoza); \$22. Wines like this have defined and propelled Malbec mania. It's ripe, bold and firm, with welcoming berry aromas and a powerful but healthy palate of ripped black cherry, berry and cola flavors. In the mix and on the finish you'll find coffee and mocha. Drink now and over the next two years. Imported by Winebow. —M.S.

90 Familia Cassone 2007 Obra Prima Reserva Malbec (Luján de Cuyo); \$20. Almost everything about this wine is right on the money, from bouquet and flavors to feel and price. The nose is sweet and floral, with deep, alluring berry aromas. The palate offers a fine texture, with pure, layered blackberry, cola and spice flavors. Satisfying on the finish and complete. Imported by Bedford International. —M.S.

90 Viu Manent 2007 Vibo Malbec (Mendoza); \$40. Plenty of mocha and vanilla combined with racy berry aromas give this an ice cream sundae-type of bouquet. The palate is healthy and snappy, with lively acidity pushing black cherry and meaty plum flavors. Whole and toasty on the finish, with touches of excellence throughout. Impressive for a first effort, with room to improve. Drink now through 2012. Imported by Baystate Wine Co. —M.S.

89 Bodega Renacer 2007 Punto Final Reserva Malbec (Mendoza); \$20. Dark, sweet and rooty on the nose, with a warm, soft outlook. The palate is bold and thorough, with ripe berry, plum and chocolate flavors. Per usual, Punto Final is ripe, sweet and big, with a peppery finish and toasty, jammy warmth. Imported by Winebow. —M.S.

89 Domaine Jean Bousquet 2009 Malbec (Mendoza); \$12. Very nice

Malbec for the money. The bouquet is floral and bright, with a hint of dry oak and mocha. The feel is full and well balanced, while the palate has a bright and lively personality with cherry, raspberry, chocolate and spice flavors. Smooth, tastes good and offers plenty of value. Imported by Buena Cepa Wines. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

89 Domaine Jean Bousquet 2009 Reserva Malbec (Mendoza); \$18. Dark and heavily oaked on first blush, but give it time to unwind or let it sit in the bottle for a year or two and this will satisfy any Malbec lover. Early on, it's dense and full of shoe polish, mint and coconut; later it spreads out to show sweet dark-berry flavors and finally a rich, almost sticky finish of woodspice, brown sugar and lushness. Imported by Buena Cepa Wines. —M.S.

89 Siesta 2007 Malbec (Mendoza); \$30. A rich and creamy sort of Malbec that pours on the weight, extract and oaky, coconutty character. The palate is syrupy, with huge flavors of roasted berry, molasses and sweet spices. Arguably on the baked and heavy side, but definitely a rich, huge wine with just enough core acidity to keep it balanced. Imported by Domaine Select Wine Estates. —M.S.

89 Trivento 2007 Eolo Malbec (Luján de Cuyo); \$79. Lively but also narrow on the nose. The feel is very fresh and juicy due to firm, bracing acidity that gives a tangy, lemony character to the wine's dark-fruit core. Snappy, linear and crisp for a wine of magnitude and extraction. Some might say it's sheering and acidic; others might call it ageworthy. Imported by Banfi Vintners. —M.S.

89 Zuccardi 2009 Serie A Malbec (Mendoza); \$15. Round, dense and correct on the nose, with heft and dark fruit aromas. The palate is tight, pure and just the right size, with blackberry, boysenberry and a bit of vanilla and caramel in the background. Smooth on the tail end, with sweet coconut and mocha notes. Friendly and well done for the price. Imported by Winesellers Ltd. —M.S.

88 Familia Cassone 2007 Obra Prima Coleccion Malbec (Mendoza); \$40. Dark and raisiny, and pushing the ripeness meter to the max. This is a dense, sweet, semihot wine with raisin, stewed berry and jammy black cherry flavors. It's big and broad, more simple than complex, with a raisiny DNA and a boatload of sweet-

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ness. Personally, I prefer Cassone's less expensive, more balanced reserva to this wine. Imported by Bedford International. —M.S.

88 Fantelli 2008 Serie Magno Malbec (Mendoza); \$15. Round, lifted and bright, with full berry, cassis and plum aromas. The palate is round and the body full, while the flavor profile includes roasted blackberry, coffee, chocolate and coconut. A full and chewy wine that comes across nice given the troubles of the '08 vintage. Imported by Kensington Distributors Inc. —M.S.

88 Filus 2008 Reserve Malbec (Uco Valley); \$20. Oaky up front, with more than a dash of mocha, caramel and sweet berry fruit aromas. The palate is zesty and honest, with juicy, bright black cherry and berry flavors. Finishes toasty and perky, with one last shot of firm acidity to keep it running long and late. Imported by Bronco Wine Company. —M.S.

88 Finca Sopenia 2009 Altosur Malbec (Tupungato); \$12. Blackberry, rubber and a suggestion of minerality work well as an invitation to this juicy, woody wine that's long and full in the mouth, with dark-fruit flavors of black cherry, blackberry and plum. Woody and toasty, too, but dry and spicy rather than sweet, blowsy and creamy. A nice Malbec for all occasions. Imported by Buena Cepa Wines. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

88 Luca 2008 Malbec (Uco Valley); \$32. Graham cracker is the lead aroma, and that's followed by jammy fruit, cookie dough and finally a touch of raisin. The palate is plump for an '08, with berry flavors, herbal notes and some bitterness. A touch clipped and rough, but a good effort for a tough year. Imported by Vine Connections. —M.S.

88 Salentein 2008 Reserve Malbec (Uco Valley); \$19. Earthy and rugged at first, then it smooths out to show cola and lush berry aromas. Plump and round in the mouth, with jammy blackberry core flavors, a hint of herbs and spice, and then a chewy, sticky, generous finish. Very nice Malbec with a cool identity. Imported by Palm Bay International. —M.S.

88 Septima 2009 Malbec (Mendoza); \$12. A well-made everyday Malbec that gets it done in all ways. Smells nice and floral, with bold, smooth berry aromas. The palate is

fresh and lively, with juicy berry flavors, controlled creamy oak notes and spice. Clean on the finish, and a pleasure to drink. Imported by Aveniù Brands, Inc. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

88 Viña Alicia 2007 Brote Negro Malbec (Luján de Cuyo); \$100. A tale of two wines. The early impression is that of a foxy, incomplete, sweaty wine with gaps in the fabric. But once it gets air, things turn around for the better. Ultimately it proves itself as a serious Malbec with a broad texture and jammy, sweet berry fruit. But it starts out so scattered and funky that it remains compromised. Imported by Southern Starz, Inc. —M.S.

87 Carlos Basso 2009 Reservado Malbec (Mendoza); \$16. Floral and fruity to open the show, and then there's plenty of oak and resin aromas coming next. The palate is tight, acid rich and woody, with solid black fruit flavors along with toasted oak notes and coconut. Juicy, fresh and healthy, but quite oaky. Imported by Southern Wine Group. —M.S.

87 Graffigna 2007 Grand Reserve Malbec (San Juan); \$20. This wine requires breathing time to show its true colors. Early on it's reduced and cheesy, but soon it offers cleaner aromas of cola, berry and dark plum. The acidity is a bit high and sheering, but on the plus side it's fresh and driving, with bright cherry and berry flavors along with ample oak. Imported by Pernod Ricard. —M.S.

87 Mendel 2008 Malbec (Mendoza); \$30. By all accounts, 2008 was a tough vintage with cool weather, stunting frosts and ripeness issues. This wine seems afflicted: its opening is good, with coconut and floral shadings. But the palate is limited in richness and the flavors are standard, with char and barrel notes creating bitterness. Nice and honest for a subpar year. Imported by Vine Connections. —M.S.

87 O. Fournier 2009 Urban Uco Malbec (Uco Valley); \$14. Warm and generous on the nose, with hints of brick dust and herbal strawberry fruit. Seems healthy and ready in the mouth, with good berry fruit, moderate spice notes and just a minor touch of herbal character. Works well, although it worked better when it was an under-\$10 wine. Imported by Fine Estates From Spain. —M.S.

87 Susana Balbo 2008 Signature Malbec (Mendoza); \$25. As the higher-end 2008s hit the market, the vintage's underwhelming character is confirmed via wines like this. Oaky and rubbery on the nose, with scattered, lean berry fruit flavors and bitterness. Like many '08s, it's short on richness and comes across unfocused. That said, it's still a good wine that's not badly made. Imported by Vine Connections. —M.S.

87 Terra Rosa 2008 Old Vine Malbec (Mendoza); \$11. Given the difficulties of 2008, this is a commendable, drinkable wine. The nose is full and dark, with ripe berry aromas. That leads to a tannic, semisharp palate with spunky blackberry fruit that comes with spice and chocolate shadings. Flavorful and correct, but a little tight and tough. Imported by Laurel Glen Vineyard. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

87 Terrazas de Los Andes 2007 Afinado Las Compuertas Single Vineyard Malbec (Mendoza); \$45. Initially it smells flat and earthy, with raisiny black fruit aromas. As it airs out it improves, but throughout its run it comes across heavy and wayward, with raisiny flavors and a simple dullness that prevents the wine from rising to the next level. Good Malbec but not a value at \$45. Imported by Moët Hennessy USA. —M.S.

87 Tilia 2009 Malbec (Mendoza); \$9. Sweet and savory aromas of hickory, BBQ and plum jam are nice, while the body is structured and full. The flavors follow the nose, meaning there's a savory, roasted quality to the wine but also jammy raspberry fruit notes. Chewy and a bit marinated, but it's quite good for the price. Imported by Winebow. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

87 Tomero 2009 Malbec (Mendoza); \$15. Sweet and candied on the nose, with marshmallow, cotton candy, chocolate-dipped cherry and dustiness. The palate has a pure feel and good ripeness, with flavors of herbal berry, toast, coffee and spice. Warm, chocolaty and oaky, with a lasting mocha flavor. Imported by San Francisco Wine Exchange. —M.S.

87 Zolo 2008 Malbec (Mendoza); \$11. Earthy and warm on first take, with deep fruit and soupy side aromas. The palate is juicy and lively, with blackberry flavors as well as toasty accents. Round, ripe and generous on the finish, with brightness but also a syrupy side. All in all it's

a good wine for the money. Imported by Epic Wines. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

86 Bodega Atamisque 2007 Catalpa Old Vines Malbec (Tupungato); \$16. Opens with a slight chemical-smelling topping to berry, raisin and cheesy aromas. The palate is chunky on one hand and driving on the other, with berry and raisiny flavors. Lush on the finish but raisiny, and overall it settles on soft-bodied and flush. Imported by Davis Wine Imports. —M.S.

86 Familia Los Agüeros 2007 Made With Organic Grapes Oak Malbec (Mendoza); \$16. Seems light, stemmy and minty on first take, but airing reveals deeper cola and sweet fruit aromas. The palate is juicy, not too heavy and strides forward, while the flavors center on basic red fruits and berry syrup. A little raisiny late, but solid as a whole. Imported by USA-Mendoza Valley Group, LLC. —M.S.

86 Finca [ñ] 2009 Malbec (Alto Valle de Uco); \$20. Quiet yet solid on the nose, with mild aromas of cassis and black fruits. The palate is a bit sharp with acidity but overall the wine is well made and clean, with red berry, plum and other standard flavors. Defines goodness while not pushing the envelope at all. Imported by Freixenet USA. —M.S.

86 High Note 2009 Elevated Malbec (Uco Valley); \$10. High Note is a dark, extracted type of Malbec with intense color, robust black fruit aromas and a rich, deep palate with core acidity and then monstrous, sweet berry flavors along the edges. It's hefty, fat and saturated, but also sweet and jammy. Delivers quantity and volume for the price. Imported by Winebow. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

86 Melipal 2008 Ikella Malbec (Mendoza); \$13. Opens with standard cherry/berry aromas, although with airing cheese notes and dill enter the picture. The palate is meaty in feel, with firm, tough, slightly roasted plum and berry flavors. Finishes hot, with a bold plum and berry character. Imported by TasteVino Selections. —M.S.

86 Mendel 2008 Lunta Malbec (Mendoza); \$20. Chunky on the nose, but also sort of rubbery, brambly, pickled and leathery. The palate is stretched and strained, with wiry acidity and piercing tannins supporting rub-

bery black fruit flavors. Grabby, tannic and a little hot on the finish. Good but on the sharp, underwhelming side. Imported by Vine Connections. —M.S.

86 Salentein 2008 Killka Malbec (Uco Valley); \$14. Jammy raspberry aromas greet you, followed by dry spice, light oak and milk chocolate scents. The palate is warm, mildly rich and resinous, with oaky flavors of pepper, spice and black fruit. Finishes quite sweet but also peppery due to the oak treatment. Imported by Palm Bay International. —M.S.

86 Terrazas de Los Andes 2009 Malbec (Mendoza); \$10. Generic and generally clean, with dry berry aromas and a touch of sharpness. The palate is full, stocky and solid, with black-fruit flavors and a medicinal character. Finishes dry, woody, peppery and slightly hot, with snap and power. Imported by Moët Hennessy USA. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

86 Terrazas de Los Andes 2008 Reserva Malbec (Mendoza); \$15. A touch grassy to start, with blueberry and blackberry aromas. The palate has a clumpy, tannic feel and snappy acids, while the flavors veer toward red berry, herbs, coffee and mocha. Tight and tannic on the finish, and overall it's short on body. Imported by Moët Hennessy USA. —M.S.

86 Viamonte 2009 Reserva Malbec (Maipú); \$15. Quite woody for this weight class, with balsam shavings and berry aromas that are distant. Chewy, lactic and creamy across the tongue, with a flavor profile that brings chocolate and berry syrup flavors. Finishes with a final wave of oaky spice and bitterness; good but needs more fruit. Imported by Casa Corbello, LLC. —M.S.

85 Carlos Basso 2009 Dos Fincas Malbec (Mendoza); \$13. Murky and leathery on first take, with dry, earthy red fruit aromas emerging later on. The palate is fresh enough, with snappy acidity and tannic bite along with wan, mild fruit flavors and spice. Perfectly adequate but short on stuffing and depth. Imported by Southern Wine Group. —M.S.

85 Diseño 2009 Old Vine Malbec (Mendoza); \$11. Good wine but a touch stemmy and burnt smelling. After the brushy, herbal aromas comes a juicy, crisp red fruit palate with raspberry and plum flavors but

also a bit of green at the core. Finishes bold but a little hot and scratchy. Imported by Constellation Wines U.S.. —M.S.

85 Enrique Foster 2007 Finca Castro Barros Reserva Malbec (Luján de Cuyo); \$24. Slightly sharp and herbal upon first impression, with green herb and field-like aromas along with rubbery, earthy black fruit. The palate is mulled and a touch edgy, with herbal, lightly stemmy berry flavors. Decent as a whole, but sort of sharp, herbal and stemmy for a higher-end wine. Imported by Dreyfus, Ashby & Co. —M.S.

85 Ruta 22 2008 Malbec (Neuquén); \$NA. Dark, rubbery aromas lead to a simple, sweet, baked, candied palate that also offers a touch of acidity and some balancing bitterness. The wine blends a fair amount of candied sweetness with a touch of butter, pepper and herbal notes. Standard fare as Malbec goes. Imported by W.J. Deutsch & Sons. —M.S.

84 Argento 2008 Tarquino Malbec (Mendoza); \$10. Earthy and leathery smelling, but very much on the light-bodied side for Malbec. The palate is angular and slightly acidic, with juicy, spicy red-cherry flavors. Racy and lean on the finish, with a final wash of cleansing acids. Imported by Lion Nathan USA, Inc. —M.S.

84 Arido 2009 Malbec (Mendoza); \$10. More leafy and mulchy than ideal, with coffee, herbal notes and a light green quality to the nose. The feel is starchy, and the flavors run burnt, mildly green and sweet, with a pasty, sticky finish. Has some merit but also falls a little short. Imported by San Francisco Wine Exchange. —M.S.

84 Kaiken 2009 Malbec (Mendoza); \$14. Funky and sharp at first, with aromas of a dog fresh out of the rain. The palate is choppy and a bit hot, with sharp, generic cherry flavors along with some carob. Finishes with angular, tart flavors and notes of coffee and mocha. Imported by T.G.I.C. Importers. —M.S.

84 Serrera 2008 Malbec (Mendoza); \$NA. Rubberly and muddled at first, then more clarity arises with airing. The palate is firm, rather lean and acidic, with angular berry and cassis flavors. Finishes on the sharp side, with snappy, pointed acidity and crispness. Imported by TasteVino Selections. —M.S.

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84 Uva Negra 2007 Reserva Malbec (Mendoza); \$16. Light and herbal on the nose, with a dilute set of raspberry and strawberry aromas. The palate has some creaminess but overall it tastes generic and baked, with syrupy sweetness at its core. An average wine with jammy qualities and focus issues. Imported by Casa Corbello, LLC. —M.S.

83 Alma Mora 2008 Malbec (San Juan); \$11. Earth and rubber aromas dominate the nose, which isn't what you'd call fresh or inviting. The palate improves only slightly, with piercing acidity pressing green-leaning plum and berry flavors. Oaky on the finish and marginal overall. Imported by TasteVino Selections. —M.S.

82 Belasco de Baquedano 2009 Llama Old Vine Malbec (Luján de Cuyo); \$15. Roasted and leathery on the nose, without much fruit. The palate is full, rubbery and baked tasting, with herbal berry flavors. Finishes cooked and heavy as well, with a sauciness that overrides any freshness of fruit. A downer compared to the fresher 2008 version. Imported by Cabernet Corporation. —M.S.

81 Camino del Inca 2008 Malbec (Cafayate); \$15. Roasted and muddy smelling, which isn't uncommon for Cafayate Malbec. The palate is heavy, murky and leafy, with roasted beet and plum flavors. Saucy and herbal as well. Imported by Vino Del Sol. —M.S.

81 Nieto Senetiner 2008 Don Nicanor Malbec (Mendoza); \$18. Black in color, with a severe, jammy nose that's ominous and heavy. The look and bouquet portend the flavors, which are thick, raisiny and prune-y. This is over-the-top heavy and extracted, with an inky outlook and subpar balance. Imported by Winebow. —M.S.

81 Viña Cornejo Costas 2008 Don Rodolfo Malbec (Cafayate); \$10. Vegetal from start to finish, as the aromas begin with tomato and bell pepper. The palate is exactly the same, with baked, earthy, sweet and green flavors. Feels gummy in the mouth, and it's not just herbal on the finish, it's green. Imported by Cabernet Corporation. —M.S.

80 Familia Marguery 2009 Casa Malbec (Mendoza); \$15. Thin and sharp as broken glass, with an herbal, sour flavor profile

and a tart, sheering mouthfeel and finish. Compared to previous vintages when this wine impressed, this is a loser. Barely drinkable, it's so lean and sour. Imported by Southern Wine Group. —M.S.

80 Salvatore Principe 2008 Artist's Collection Malbec (Cafayate); \$10. Rubbery and gassy smelling, with overtones of green, herbaceous fruit. The palate is sharp and grating, with pie cherry, sour raspberry and green olive flavors. Turns herbal to excess and finishes substandard. Imported by Prestige Wine Group. —M.S.

80 Zorzal 2008 Reserve Malbec (Mendoza); \$23. A scratchy, sheering wine that pushes up against sour. The palate is almost all acid, and the flavors are underdeveloped, very tart and razor sharp. Clean but hard to deal with. Imported by Casa Corbello, LLC. —M.S.

MERLOT

86 Andeluna 2006 Reserve Merlot (Tupungato); \$20. Earthy and rubbery, then more leafy and red, on the nose, with raspberry and plum fruit. The palate has a solid, ordinary feel and jammy flavors of baked berry. Standard finish with a fast fade. Imported by San Francisco Wine Exchange. —M.S.

86 Rutini 2006 Merlot (Mendoza); \$20. Slightly grassy and jammy on the nose, but otherwise you get basic cherry and raspberry aromas. The palate is medium bodied and a bit sharp in feel, with fresh, simple cherry and raspberry flavors. Tight and straightforward on the finish, with a hint of spice and chocolate. Imported by Pasternak Wine Imports. —M.S.

82 Bodega Norton 2007 Barrel Select Merlot (Mendoza); \$14. Strained on the nose, with dirty fruit aromas, gaseousness and candy. The palate is cloying and confectioned, with muddy, jammy, herbal fruit flavors and a cooked, weedy finish. Bulky but not very good. Imported by T.G.I.C. Importers. —M.S.

81 Bodega Norton 2007 Reserva Merlot (Mendoza); \$20. Herbal, green, stemmy Merlot with sourness and compromised aromas, flavors and mouthfeel. Tastes bitter and on the harsh side, with a narrow,

grabby finish. Too green and mean, especially for \$20. Imported by T.G.I.C. Importers. —M.S.

BONARDA

90 Nieto Senetiner 2008 Limited Edition Reserva Bonarda (Mendoza); \$28. Bold and packed to the gills with black fruit, well-applied oak and rubbery, fresh tannins. As Bonarda goes, this is a clear winner; it's blowsy and ribald on the nose, with tons of black fruit, coconut and mocha. The palate is firm but not overly hard, with fig, black plum and length to the finish. Drink now through 2012. Imported by Winebow. —M.S.

89 Alma Negra 2007 Bonarda (Mendoza); \$22. Like a good Bonarda should be, this is sweet, lush, dense and jammy on the nose. The palate brings big tannins and a slight rubbery mouthfeel, but the flavors of black cherry and wild berry are big, tasty and untamed. Full of power; needs airing upon opening but aging isn't necessary. Includes 20% Malbec and 10% Cab Franc. Imported by Winebow. —M.S.

87 Valle de la Puerta 2009 La Puerta Alta Bonarda (Famatina Valley); \$15. Starts out earthy and gaseous but the bouquet settles on round, full blackberry aromas. Lush, grabby and full in the mouth, with bold blackberry flavors that are clean, forward, uncomplicated and even a bit elegant. Tastes good and comes across smooth and polished for Bonarda. Imported by Eco Valley. —M.S.

86 Cavas de Chacras 2008 Reserve Bonarda (Mendoza); \$12. Aromas of dark berry are potent but narrow and limited, and there's a slight note of minty grass as well. The wine is juicy, bouncy and fresh in the mouth, with dark cherry and blackberry flavors. Simple, fruity and tasty, with good balance. Imported by Casa Corbello, LLC. —M.S.

85 Tercos 2008 Bonarda (Mendoza); \$12. Opens with grassy notes along with cleaner, fruitier cherry and cassis aromas. The palate is medium bodied, with forward, jammy flavors of blackberry. Finishes flush but simple, with softness as opposed to a strong backbone of heavy tannins. Imported by Global Vineyard Importers. —M.S.

CABERNET SAUVIGNON

92 Bodega Catena Zapata 2007 Catena Alta Cabernet Sauvignon (Mendoza); \$50. Deep, lush, balanced and oaky, with bacon, floral notes and huge raspberry and cassis aromas. Layered and structured across the palate, with concentration and balance to go with lusty cassis, blackberry, mocha and spice flavors. Finishes toasty and dark, with waves of espresso and mocha. Now–2015. Imported by Winebow. **Cellar Selection.** —M.S.

89 Bodega Catena Zapata 2008 Catena Cabernet Sauvignon (Mendoza); \$20. A dark and toasty specimen with a deep-purple tint and aromas of oak, butter and powerful blackberry fruit. The palate is textured and rich, with thick, smoky flavors of black fruits and peppery spice. Pours on the oak but in an integrated way; very good for varietal Cab from 2008. Imported by Winebow. —M.S.

87 Septima 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (Mendoza); \$12. Concentrated, dark and clean for a basic 2008 Cabernet, with full but generic berry aromas and a pinch of rubber. The body is good and so is the structure, and overall the wine's roasted berry flavors blend well with sweet vanilla and caramel. Very good for value-priced Argentine CS. Imported by Avenù Brands, Inc. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

87 Siesta 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Mendoza); \$20. Smoky, dark, rich and very oaky, with leather and cheese aromas. This is one concentrated, tannic bruiser; it's fully extracted and roasted, with blackberry, molasses, pepper and coffee flavors. A lush, round, jammy specimen that pours on richness in place of elegance and sophistication. Imported by Domaine Select Wine Estates. —M.S.

86 Alberti 154 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon (Mendoza); \$13. Scratchy on the nose, with raspberry and plum aromas. The palate has a generic, rubbery feel and sweet, standard cherry, cassis and plum flavors. Medicinal and rubbery on the finish, but will go well with basic foods like pizza, spaghetti or a burger. Imported by Southern Wine Group. —M.S.

86 Medanos 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (Mendoza); \$19. Firm and leathery smelling, with a drying, oaky nose and

then lifted, sweet flavors of jammy raspberry and cassis. The fruit here is riper than many '08 Cabs, and while it's a bit lean in feel, it tastes good and offers ample spice for balance. Imported by Casa Corbello, LLC. —M.S.

86 Tilia 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon (Mendoza); \$9. Big and purple, with ripe aromas of black fruits and bacon. The mouth is filling and full, with oaky blackberry, coffee and mildly roasted flavors. Turns more lush and soft on the finish, which is long and tastes of fig paste and prunes. Gets it done for the most part. Imported by Winebow. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

85 Alta Vista 2009 Classic Cabernet Sauvignon (Mendoza); \$12. Full but roasted and rubbery, with baked berry aromas leading to a thick, semistewed palate with dark berry and vanilla flavors. The palate is big but choppy, and the finish is also thick and tannic. Definitely round and meaty, but slips to the stewy side. Imported by Buena Cepa Wines. —M.S.

85 Doña Paula 2008 Estate Cabernet Sauvignon (Mendoza); \$15. Starts out mildly murky and leafy, with a leathery, dry nose. The palate is herbal, tight and juicy due to a high acid level, with red berry and peppery, mildly herbal flavors. A good, average wine with oak showing up on the finish. Imported by Vineyard Brands. —M.S.

85 Espuela del Gaucho 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon (Mendoza); \$13. Lightly herbal and red in character, with tomato and raspberry aromas. The palate is snappy and emphasizes freshness, while the flavors are herbal and leafy, with plenty of red berry and cherry. Snappy and pointed, with a leafy overriding personality. Imported by Winery Exchange. —M.S.

85 Melipal 2008 Ikella Cabernet Sauvignon (Mendoza); \$13. Dark, rubbery aromas include black cherry, leather and cheesy notes. The palate is fairly high in acid, producing juiciness but also tartness and a lean, sinewy body housing snappy cherry, spice and herbal flavors. Good but prickly. Imported by TasteVino Selections. —M.S.

85 Ruca Malen 2009 Yauquén Cabernet Sauvignon (Mendoza); \$12. Rather jammy, murky and generic on the nose, with black-fruit aromas that center around plum and blackberry. The palate is edgy but fresh, with

snappy, tarry black-fruit flavors. Feels rugged, rough and tannic but gets the job done in its price range. Imported by Opici Wines. —M.S.

84 Alamos 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon (Mendoza); \$13. Big, rubbery and smoky, with exotic fruit aromas that seem roasted. The palate is tough, tannic and clipped, with herbal, thick flavors of berry, baking spices and coffee. Finishes big but flat and hard, with lasting herbal flavors. Imported by E & J Gallo. —M.S.

84 Finca Decero 2008 Remolinos Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Agrelo); \$20. Warm and saucy aromas suggest a bit of leafiness and volatility. The palate is rather tannic and somewhat hot, with leafy, herbal cherry and raspberry flavors. Finishes similarly, with pepper and herbal flavors. Imported by Vintus LLC. —M.S.

84 Finca Sopenia 2009 Altosur Cabernet Sauvignon (Tupungato); \$12. Lean, mildly green aromas offer minimal fruit, and there's a salinic, swimming pool set of aromas as well. The palate is fairly thick and solid, with big tannins and flavors of candied fruits and carob that lean toward green. Shows big body and weight, but the nose is only fair while the flavors are herbal. Imported by Buena Cepa Wines. —M.S.

84 Finca Sopenia 2009 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon (Tupungato); \$18. Smells foxy and broken up, with a slight stemminess. The palate is tannic and drawing, with generic black fruit flavors that are candied with brown sugar and molasses. Sweet, rough, tough and like 1,000 others. Will do best with food, which should absorb some of the tannic shock. Imported by Buena Cepa Wines. —M.S.

84 Terrazas de Los Andes 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon (Mendoza); \$10. Earthy aromas mix with high-toned red fruit scents, while the palate is narrow and linear, with mildly green, saucy flavors that crowd out mild red fruit notes that fight to enter the picture. Herbal on the finish, but not offensive or difficult to drink. Imported by Moët Hennessy USA. —M.S.

84 Uva Negra 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Mendoza); \$12. Dark purple in color, with a simple, candied, somewhat strained nose. The palate feels sharp while the

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acidity-tannin combo creates a narrowing mouthfeel. Flavors are roasted, herbal and lemony, while the finish is jumpy and edgy. Imported by Casa Corbello, LLC. —M.S.

84 Viamonte 2009 Roble Cabernet Sauvignon (Maipú); \$13. Hefty but kind of flat on the bouquet, with tomato and herb aromas. The palate has tannic bite and dark, candied flavors of sweet berry and burnt brown sugar. Finishes peppery, with a lingering candied, burnt sweetness. Imported by Casa Corbello, LLC. —M.S.

83 Benegas 2007 Luna Benegas Cabernet Sauvignon (Mendoza); \$14. Raw on the nose, with a hard, tannic palate that features sweet black-fruit flavors, a chemical burn and raisin. The more time you spend with it, the darker and more raisiny it becomes. Finishes roasted, with licorice and rock-hard tannins. Imported by Vias Imports. —M.S.

83 Carlos Basso 2009 Reservado Cabernet Sauvignon (Mendoza); \$16. An odd bird on the nose, where floral, lavender aromas replace the normal set of cassis and berry. In the mouth, it's so tannic that it's like chewing nails; the flavors, therefore, seem choppy and hard, like roasted blackberry and sugar beets. Very woody and mentholated, too. Imported by Southern Wine Group. —M.S.

82 Bodega Vistandes 2009 Alto Las Tacas Cabernet Sauvignon (Mendoza); \$10. Weak and brambly smelling, with mustardy aromas along with leathery red-fruit scents. The palate is astringent, with tomato, basil and stewed berry flavors. Finishes in similar fashion. Imported by Belmont Select Wines. —M.S.

80 Bodegas Borbore 2009 Martin Fierro Cabernet Sauvignon (Tulum Valley); \$10. Weird, green, spicy and odd smelling, with hard, green raisiny flavors and an herbal finish. Barely acceptable; not varietally sound or interesting. Imported by RV Distributors. —M.S.

SYRAH

88 Pascual Toso 2009 Syrah (Mendoza); \$12. Minty, oaky and spicy up front, with cherry and berry aromas that are potent. The palate is lush, flush and tannic, with

aggressive flavors of bacon, smoke, roasted blackberry and savory spices. It finishes well, with freshness along with a dark, smoky tail. Imported by T.G.I.C. Importers. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

86 Alberti 154 2009 Syrah (Luján de Cuyo); \$13. Rubbery, tarry and quite black in nature, with a full-bodied mouthfeel and meaty, spicy dark-berry flavors. This ranks as a voluminous wine with a heavy disposition; it's sweet and spicy late, with generic bold-fruit character throughout. Imported by Southern Wine Group. —M.S.

86 Zuccardi 2009 Serie A Syrah (Mendoza); \$15. Chunky, earthy, malty and fruity all at the same time, but clacky and tough in the mouth, with big, grabby tannins supporting generic black fruit flavors. An aggressive, hard wine with sappy, jammy flavors; it delivers full kick and size. Imported by Winesellers Ltd. —M.S.

85 Finca Sopenia 2009 Reserve Syrah (Tupungato); \$18. Bold and minty, with no shortage of tarry, rubbery black-fruit aromas. The palate is full, meaty, tough and tannic, with heat and candied, confected flavors that suggest chocolate-covered cherry and kirsch. Finishes sweet and candied, with average structure and stuffing. Imported by Buena Cepa Wines. —M.S.

82 Condor's Summit 2009 Syrah (Famatina Valley); \$10. Sweet cotton candy and mocha aromas are confected and work to obscure a high-acid, sour-tasting palate that offers a slight hint of chocolate and mint. More oak comes up on the finish, and overall this is a ghost of a wine with little to latch onto. Imported by Peyton Imports. —M.S.

BLENDED REDS

94 Bodega Catena Zapata 2007 Nicolas Catena Zapata (Mendoza); \$120. A ripe, modern success with everything a fan of New World reds might want. The nose is floral and beautiful, with fine oak scents supporting brilliant raspberry, plum and spice aromas. It's deep, smooth and pressing in the mouth, with a delicious set of blackberry, coconut, vanilla and creamy flavors. A beauty to drink now through 2017. Imported by Winebow. —M.S.

92 Cheval des Andes 2006 Mendoza; \$70. Full, dense and dark, with powerful berry aromas and hints of rubber and leather on the bouquet. The palate breathes complexity and style but also raw power, and the flavors of blackberry, fig paste and herbs are just lusty and rich enough to register as modern Mendoza. Classy and deep; best from 2011–2015. A Malbec-Cabernet-Petit Verdot blend. Imported by Moët Hennessy USA. **Cellar Selection.** —M.S.

91 Felipe Rutini 2006 Apartado (Mendoza); \$70. Oaky, creamy and a bit lactic on the nose, with an easy style to the palate and ripe, sweet flavors of blackberry and black cherry that are delicious but lack complexity. Finishes big, syrupy and sweet, with a spot of raisin. Really good for a blend of Malbec, Cabernet and Petit Verdot. Drink now through 2013. Imported by Pasternak Wine Imports. —M.S.

91 Septima 2008 Gran Reserva (Mendoza); \$25. Despite tough vintage conditions, Bodega Septima got this blend of Malbec, Cabernet and Tannat right. The nose is dark, solid and full of attractive black fruit and coconut aromas. Lush and a mile deep on the palate, with sultry, smoky, dark flavors of blackberry, licorice and spice. A chewy, rich and balanced wine; drink now through 2014. Imported by Aveniù Brands, Inc. —M.S.

90 Fantelli 2003 Serie Magno Gran Reserva (Mendoza); \$15. Here's a Bordeaux-style blend to snap up if you're lucky enough to find it. It's a definite re-issue in that it was first released at \$25 in 2006 but was put back on the market last year at \$15. And what a bargain it is: Earth, tar and tobacco vie with dried cherry and raspberry on the nose and palate; the finish is long, elegant and dry. A mature, classy wine to drink now. Imported by Kensington Distributors Inc. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

90 Viña Alicia 2007 Morena (Luján de Cuyo); \$30. Very clean, smooth and inviting. Every piece is in place, and the wine flows from nose to palate to finish with ease and comfort. Flavors of black cherry, cassis and blackberry are creamy and deep, with a hint of vanilla sweetness and oak. Warm and chewy as well. Cabernet Sauvignon with 12% Cab Franc; drink now. Imported by Southern Starz, Inc. —M.S.

90 Weinert 2006 Carrascal (Mendoza); \$22. A bit rusty in color and

mature, but that's what makes this wine different than most. It's earthy, a bit leathery and muddled, and slightly baked. But it's also subdued, mellow and sturdy, with lighter tannins and hints of herbs to go with finely roasted berry and tomato flavors. Integrated, long and spicy late. Drink now through 2012. Imported by Broadbent Selections, Inc. —M.S.

89 Alma Negra 2007 Gran Misterio (Mendoza); \$80. Dark as night, with shoe polish, coconut and powerful black-fruit aromas. This is jammy, dense, soft and not for aging, but it does deliver a truck load of toasted coffee, blackberry, molasses and crisped brown sugar. Supersweet, rich and made to drink now. Imported by Winebow. —M.S.

89 Alta Vista 2008 Atemporal (Mendoza); \$25. Woody and smelling of sawdust early, this four-grape blend eases toward roasted berry, cassis, herbal plum and molten chocolate. It's massive and structured, with a big-boned skeleton and heat on the leathery, roasted finish due to 15.5% alcohol. Big, fiery, saucy and lusty, but short on refinement and elegance. Imported by Buena Cepa Wines. —M.S.

89 Vistalba 2007 Corte B (Mendoza); \$23. After a rubbery opening, this blend of Malbec, Cabernet Sauvignon and Bonarda picks up steam and freshens up significantly. Aromas of sly dried berry take over, leading to a full, flush palate of plum, raspberry and raisin. Comes around the more time you spend with it. Imported by San Francisco Wine Exchange. —M.S.

88 Viña El Cerno 2003 Filósofos (Maipú); \$60. Opens with candied, chocolaty aromas that contradict its age. In the mouth, it's mature although the structure is breaking up; nonetheless, it's interesting and attractive, with herb, raspberry, tea, tobacco and chocolate flavors. Overall it's a different breed, and despite having lost its structure it's sly and well worth a go. Drink now. Imported by Casa Corbello, LLC. —M.S.

87 Valle de la Puerta 2007 La Puerta Gran Reserva (Famatina Valley); \$40. Bold and prune-y, with herbal, soft, ultra-ripe aromas in front of a jumpy yet partially stewed palate. This blend of Malbec with Bonarda and Syrah is your typical huge, tannic bruiser with big extract, huge tannins and just

enough acidity to keep it pumping. Pretty good and perfectly drinkable, but a little over the edge. Imported by Eco Valley. —M.S.

87 Zuccardi 2007 Zeta (Mendoza); \$45. Minty and heavily oaked, with creamy aromas of vanilla bean, milk chocolate and raisiny sweetness. The palate smacks down with a tight, rubbery feel and then unleashes heavy, toasty flavors of herbal berry fruit, raw oak and mocha. Good for a rich, robust wine but it doesn't excel and it seems a little out of balance. Imported by Winesellers Ltd. —M.S.

86 Serrera 2008 Del Pecado Cabernet Sauvignon-Malbec (Mendoza); \$12. Starts out rubbery and gaseous, but airing helps it along. The palate is regular in feel, with no glaring faults, while the flavors of berry fruits, oak and herbal shadings are easygoing. Finishes with toast, herbal notes and a mild baked sweetness. Imported by TasteVino Selections. —M.S.

85 Carmelo Patti 2003 Gran Assemblage (Mendoza); \$55. Initially you get nothing but herbs, spice and tomato off this Bordeaux blend. The nose deals bell pepper, red pepper flake and tomato such that it smells more like chimichurri than wine. But with airing it improves to reveal dry strawberry, cherry and herbal spice flavors. More saucy, green and savory than fruity, and probably past its prime; but still it's offering some mature class and style. Imported by Southern Wine Group. —M.S.

85 Colomé 2008 Amalaya (Calchaqui Valley); \$17. A Malbec-led blend that's off the grid by Argentine standards but which reflects the northern Salta region. The nose is earthy, herbal, roasted and tomatoey, while the palate is astringent and roasted, with herbal, spicy flavors of tomato, bell pepper and baked berries. Long and baked on the finish, with a slight fiery feel. Imported by Hess Collection. —M.S.

83 Familia Los Agüeros 2007 Premium Made With Organic Grapes Blend de Familia (Mendoza); \$15. Fairly muddled and earthy at first blush, with a leafy, raisiny, burnt set of aromas. Tastes and feels mealy, with roasted cherry and raspberry flavors and then a leathery finish. Hints at quality but doesn't bring it home; and it seems tired. Imported by USA-Mendoza Valley Group, LLC. —M.S.

83 The Wait 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon-Syrah (Mendoza); \$13. Light and tomatoey in color, with dry, cheesy, earthy aromas. The palate is dilute but has sticky tannins, and the flavors are tangy, citrusy and not overly sound. Finishes roasted and clumsy. An awkward wine. Imported by Testa Wines Of The World. —M.S.

ARGENTINA WHITE WINES

CHARDONNAY

87 Bodega Catena Zapata 2009 Catena Chardonnay (Mendoza); \$20. A touch creamy and showing fresh corn and haystack on the nose, but in the mouth it's plump, good and mild, with fleshy white fruit flavors sitting in front of a smooth, lightly pithy finish. Yes, it's another warm-climate tropical Chardonnay. But it's a good one that's easy to drink. Imported by Winebow. —M.S.

87 Terrazas de Los Andes 2009 Chardonnay (Mendoza); \$10. Clean and tropical, and not too heavy, oily or chunky. The nose is pure lemon, pear and apple, while the flavor profile revolves around citrus, apple and honey in the center. Finishes sweeter than it starts, but with dry papaya for balance. Good everyday Chardonnay from Argentina, something we don't see too often. Imported by Moët Hennessy USA. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

87 Tilia 2009 Chardonnay (Mendoza); \$9. Light, airy, tropical and very nice for an under-\$10 Argentine Chardonnay. The nose is nice and easy, while the flavors of orange, melon and lychee are tropical but seem right for the wine's body and acidity. Easygoing as they come, with a hint of sweetness on the finish. Imported by Winebow. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

86 Bodega Catena Zapata 2008 Catena Alta Chardonnay (Mendoza); \$34. Waxy and warm, with peach, sweet ham, spice and vanilla aromas. As Catena Alta goes, this is not stellar. In fact, it's light on fruit and lacks the depth of flavor and punch you'd hope to see from a \$34 wine. What you get is a fleshy, soft Chard with mild peach, papaya and melon flavors, and then a whack of finishing oak. Imported by Winebow. —M.S.

86 Pascual Toso 2010 Chardonnay (Mendoza); \$12. Simple, well made and tropical, with a touch of oak. The palate is zesty, citric and healthy, with pineapple and orange flavors along with a pinch of star anise, vanillin and pith. Finishes fresh and juicy, with mild vanilla shadings. Imported by T.G.I.C. Importers. —M.S.

85 Viña Cobos 2009 Felino Chardonnay (Mendoza); \$20. Smells a bit heavy, oily and like dry cornflakes. The palate is straightforward, with tropical, candied flavors of mango, banana and sweet melon. Sweetness is the key here; it's all over the palate and finish. Imported by Paul Hobbs Winery. —M.S.

84 Bodega Norton 2010 Chardonnay (Mendoza); \$10. Light and airy, with orange blossom and powdered sugar aromas. The palate is round and offers enough crisp acidity to keep the wine's lychee and lemon-lime flavors moving in the right direction. Reasonably good for ten bucks. Imported by T.G.I.C. Importers. —M.S.

84 O. Fournier 2008 Urban Uco Chardonnay (Mendoza); \$12. A bit gaseous on the nose, with cidery apple aromas. The palate is waxy, oily and heavy, with chunky melon and papaya flavors. Meaty and full-bodied for a value-priced Chard, but also heavy and struggling for balance. Imported by Fine Estates From Spain. —M.S.

84 Rutini 2008 Chardonnay (Mendoza); \$20. Fairly bland on the nose, with only a pinch of mild peach and candle wax. The palate is full but wholly generic in terms of flavors: look for sweet pineapple in front of a soft, almost cloying finish. Drink now. Imported by Pasternak Wine Imports. —M.S.

84 Tapiz 2010 Chardonnay (Mendoza); \$15. Chunky on the nose, with flat aromas of apple and peach. The palate has a melony feel and sweet flavors of mango and mandarin orange. Finishes sort of heavy and tropical, with a little leftover heat. Good enough but highly regular. Imported by Vino Del Sol. —M.S.

83 Funky Llama 2010 Chardonnay (Mendoza); \$7. Floral, sweet and powdery smelling, but pleasant. The palate is light and airy, with hardly any punch or kick. But that serves it well, and amid the sheets there's

lime, green-apple notes and tropical shadings. Not bad for the price. Imported by Tastings Import Company. —M.S.

83 Los Nevados 2009 Chardonnay (Mendoza); \$10. Vanilla and toast aromas are prominent but the fruit is so subdued that overall the wine is out to lunch. Snappy and showing okay acidity in the mouth, but the flavors are dull and melony, with toasty vanilla notes that don't help it enough. Imported by Matadorvino LLC. —M.S.

83 Piattelli 2009 Premium Chardonnay (Tupungato); \$13. Smells resinous and a touch chemical, with cornflakes and vanilla bean notes. The palate is resinous and dusty, with sweet, candied, vanilla-infused flavors that crowd out any fruit that might want to make a stand. Finishes with faux oak notes and more vanilla. Imported by Vinocopia. —M.S.

83 Rutini 2010 Trumpeter Chardonnay (Mendoza); \$12. Neutral on the nose except for mild hay and/or straw aromas. The palate is a bit weighty for being so short on flavor. Speaking of which, the wine is clean but tastes hollow, with only sparse flavors of peach and nectarine registering. Imported by Pasternak Wine Imports. —M.S.

PINOT GRIGIO

86 Argento 2010 Cool Climate Selection Pinot Grigio (Mendoza); \$13. Modest, minerally and clean, with mild dusty apple aromas. The palate is pillowy and comfortable, with just enough acidity to push up the apple, green grape and white plum flavors. Finishes similarly, with a sweet lasting impression. Imported by Lion Nathan USA, Inc.. —M.S.

85 Funky Llama 2010 Pinot Grigio (Mendoza); \$7. Clean, timid and melony on the nose, with an emphasis on clean. Fresh and light in the mouth, and tasty despite being 100% uncomplicated. Flavors of sweet apple, pear and citrus are pleasant and should carry mass appeal. Good for an everyday white quaffer. Imported by Tastings Import Company. *Best Buy.* —M.S.

84 Alma Mora 2009 Pinot Grigio (San Juan); \$11. Smells a bit waxy and grassy, with mild, distant white-fruit aromas. The

palate feels pithy and chalky, with generic citrus flavors and then citrus pith on the back end. Finishes with more pithiness and white grapefruit. Imported by TasteVino Selections. —M.S.

83 Condor's Summit 2008 Pinot Grigio (Famatina Valley); \$10. Neutral smelling with a hint of lemon-lime and children's vitamin. The palate is wet but doesn't bring much more in the way of feel, while the flavors are flat, melony and hint at apple. This wine is old by PG standards but not yet dead. It's hanging in there. Imported by Peyton Imports. —M.S.

TORRONTÉS

88 Filus 2010 Torrontés (Salta); \$13. A pretty white wine with lively aromas, flavors and feel. The bouquet issues attractive lychee, melon and vanilla cream aromas, while the palate flows forth with apple, melon and exotic citrus flavors. Just spicy enough on the tail end, with a lasting taste of lychee fruit. Delicate, solid and fresh. Imported by Bronco Wine Company. *Best Buy.* —M.S.

88 Zolo 2010 Torrontés (Mendoza); \$11. A nice, clean, fairly complex white is what this is. The nose is all lychee and jasmine, and it's not at all heavy or oily. The palate is bouncy and fresh, with a tropical mix of lychee, melon and papaya flavors. Agile on the finish. Imported by Vino Del Sol. *Best Buy.* —M.S.

87 Pascual Toso 2010 Torrontés (Mendoza); \$12. Having tasted the previous vintages and not liking them all that much, I can safely say that this 2010 is a much better, cleaner, more varietally correct version of Torrontés. It's clean, fresh and defined by light aromas and flavors of lime and green melon. Juicy and soda-like on the finish. Imported by T.G.I.C. Importers. *Best Buy.* —M.S.

86 Bodega Norton 2010 Lo Tengo Torrontés (Mendoza); \$11. Simple and light, with orange blossom aromas. The palate is clean, zesty and citric, with apple, lime and lychee flavors. Chalky on the finish and cleansing. For casual sipping. Imported by T.G.I.C. Importers. *Best Buy.* —M.S.

86 Medrano 2010 Estate Torrontés (Salta); \$10. Tropical and typical for the variety, with lychee and oily match stick on

the nose. The palate is competent, with lemon-lime, apple and spiced Asian pear flavors. Dries out nicely on the finish; good Torrontés to drink as soon as possible. Imported by Bronco Wine Company. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

86 Tukma 2009 Reserva Torrontés (Cafayate); \$15. Pungent aromas of citrus range from lemon to orange, and there's also an oily element to the bouquet. The palate has a highly regular, almost lazy feel to it along with flavors of pithy citrus and nectarine pit. Finishes lemony and melony. Imported by Matorvino LLC. —M.S.

85 Rutini 2010 Trumpeter Torrontés (Mendoza); \$12. Neutral smelling other than a hint of peach and vanilla on the bouquet. Comes across a bit heavy and warm, but not too much so. Flavors of soft melon are appealing, and the finish is fleshy. Drink now before it loses its spunk. Imported by Pasternak Wine Imports. —M.S.

85 Terrazas de Los Andes 2009 Reserva Unoaked Torrontés (Salta); \$10. Aromas of buttercup, melon and lychee maintain their basic freshness but seem on the heavy side. The palate is similar; it's both chalky and heavy. Flavors of apple, melon and nectarine are solid but slightly bitter, and the finish is grabby and sticky. Imported by Moët Hennessy USA. —M.S.

84 Bodega Goulart 2010 Torrontés (Luján de Cuyo); \$12. A little stinky and oily, which is often the downfall of the variety. The palate has a viscous grab to it and the flavors are rather generic and rudimentary, i.e. simple apple and melon with a mild chemical burn. Seems only semifresh at a young age. Imported by Southern Starz, Inc. —M.S.

84 O. Fournier 2009 Urban Uco Torrontés (Cafayate); \$11. Tropical and blowsy on the nose. The palate is now chunky and heavy, while the flavors are mustardy and oily, with fruit notes that fall into the melon, peach and orange field. Flat and short on the finish, which indicates that it's already fading. Better to wait for the 2010. Imported by Fine Estates From Spain. —M.S.

84 Piattelli 2009 Premium Torrontés (Cafayate); \$13. Other than showing orange and tangerine, the nose is a bit too much like air freshener. In the mouth, it's wet but on the hollow side, with dilute innocuous flavors. Decent but low on flavor; seemingly fading. Imported by Vinocopia. —M.S.

84 Trapiche 2009 Broquel Torrontés (Cafayate); \$15. Mildly tropical on the nose, but for the most part the bouquet lacks punch. The palate has friction and an oily feel, while the flavors are generic as they suggest apple and lime. Chalky and kind of bland on the finish; seems to be fading. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd. —M.S.

83 Palo Alto 2009 Coiron Torrontés (Maipú); \$11. Neutral on the nose except for a smidgen of lychee and citrus. The palate is standard and generic, with bland peach, melon and pithy flavors. Finishes light and peachy, with weight and fading acidity. Imported by Casa Corbello, LLC. —M.S.

82 Tilia 2009 Torrontés (Salta); \$10. Loud, oily and almost caustic on the nose, with a chemical burn. The palate is better due to its tangy citric flavors, but it's still jumbled and oily, and the finish leaves a burnt-tasting residue. Imported by Winebow. —M.S.

81 Bodega Vistandes 2009 Alto Las Tacas Torrontés (Mendoza); \$10. Smells like corn and a burning hay field, and the palate has little to no fruit left. The mouthfeel is wet and grabby, while the finish is breadly then turns bitter. On its last legs; wait for 2010. Imported by Belmont Select Wines. —M.S.

OTHER WHITE WINES

84 Viña Alicia 2009 Tiara White Blend (Luján de Cuyo); \$30. A blend of Riesling, Albariño and Savagnin that's more novel than impressive. The nose offers light citrus and spice, the body is creamy and soft, and the palate sweet with papaya, melon and pineapple. Creamy on the finish as well, and low in acidity. Imported by Southern Starz, Inc. —M.S.

**SOUTH AFRICA
RED WINES**

CABERNETS & BLENDS

93 Vilafonté 2007 Series C (Paarl); \$50. A beautifully balanced and nuanced wine. The aromas are heady and thick but still vibrant, displaying juicy notes of black cherry, black raspberry sauce and semidried fig laced with accents of bittersweet chocolate, tobacco and white pepper. The texture is like crushed satin, with well-integrated tannins and a creamy mouthfeel. Touches of licorice root and smoky cedar spice augment the dark fruit on the lengthy finish. Drink now–2014. Imported by Broadbent Selections, Inc. —L.B.

92 Glenelly 2008 Lady May Cabernet Sauvignon (Simonsberg-Stellenbosch); \$50. It's really a shame that only 25 cases of this wine were imported, as it's a fantastic Cab that's sure to compare favorably to some of your favorites. Black currant leaf, fennel, crushed violet and dried tobacco are intricately woven into the dark fruit aromas. The medium-weight mouth has a texture like crushed velvet, with firm tannins and assertive flavors of cassis, cigar and espresso that linger endlessly. Strong and a bit tight; try holding another 2–5 years. Imported by Cape Classics. *Cellar Selection.* —L.B.

92 Vilafonté 2007 Series M (Paarl); \$35. Although this might be second to the Series C, it's still up there in terms of high quality and class. Red plum, fresh fig and subtle blueberry are augmented by glimmers of licorice and earthy spice. The mouth is full and as forward as the nose, loaded with thick juicy fruit flavors that lead gracefully into the raspberry mash and tobacco infused finish. Drink now–2013. Imported by Broadbent Selections, Inc. —L.B.

91 Cederberg 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (Cederberg); \$40. Cocoa dusted black raspberry, black currant and plum aromas up front transition to flavors of blackberry and fudgy brownie. Creamy and full in the mouth with medium tannins and a velvety texture. Approachable now, but pair with a good steak or fatty game like shoulder lamb chops for balance. Imported by Worthwhile Wine Company. —L.B.

91 Rust en Vrede 2007 Estate Red (Stellenbosch); \$40. A heady and concentrated Cab-based blend with 30% Shiraz and 9% Merlot. Intense aromas of blackberry, cassis, cedar spice and rich espresso grinds fill the bouquet, while black cherry, plum, cured meat and soft bramble unfold in the mouth. Full and tightly structured with firm tannins and a lingering finish; drink now to 2012. Imported by Terlato Wines International. —L.B.

91 Warwick 2007 Estate Reserve (Trilogy) (Stellenbosch); \$30. This is a gorgeous Bordeaux-style blend that grabs you right from the start with a decadent nose of black currant liqueur, toasted coconut, black cherry, cedar and a hint of purple African violet florals. The mouth is round but not fat, with a firm but not unyielding structure followed by a toffee-kissed finish that lingers endlessly. Drink now–2015. Imported by Broadbent Selections, Inc. —L.B.

90 Glenelly 2008 The Glass Collection Cabernet Sauvignon (Western Cape); \$18. The aromas are promisingly thick and chewy, with assertive notes of black cherry, cigar tobacco and bittersweet chocolate. The creamy mouth delivers more of the same alongside additional elements of cassis, pepper and leathery spice. The mocha-infused finish leaves little else to be desired; drink now. Imported by Cape Classics. *Editors' Choice.* —L.B.

90 Muratie 2007 Ansela Van de Caab (Simonsberg-Stellenbosch); \$35. Vibrant, attractive notes of red cherry, plum, raspberry sauce and licorice root draw you in immediately, and continue on to the palate alongside complementary accents of sweet spice and white pepper. Medium weight in the mouth with grippy tannins and a strong finish. Imported by Worthwhile Wine Company. —L.B.

89 Black Pearl 2008 Oro Cabernet Sauvignon-Shiraz (Paarl); \$18. The '08 Oro is Cab dominant while the '07 favored Shiraz, a difference that seems to be an improvement. Rich and concentrated with lovely dark plum, cassis and black raspberry components coupled with accents of tree bark, sweet spice and soft cigar tobacco. Fresh and lush all at once; easy to drink now or can hold for a year or two. Imported by Southern Starz, Inc. —L.B.

89 Rustenberg 2007 John X Merri-man (Stellenbosch); \$30. Strong aromas of cassis, cocoa nibs, fresh mint sprigs, black currant leaf and licorice are the first things you experience with this wine. After that, the creamy mouth provides loads of black berry, plum and anise flavors that stay through the finish. A firmly structured and well-balanced Bordeaux-style blend. Imported by Cape Classics. —L.B.

87 Beau Joubert 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (Stellenbosch); \$17. Nice licorice and black currant scents fill the bouquet, with a touch of mentholy bramble adding some flair. The palate is bright and fruit forward, the dominating dark fruit flavors lifted by peppery spice. Medium weight with soft tannins and a solid finish. Imported by Metrowine Distribution. —L.B.

87 Boekenhoutskloof 2009 Porcupine Ridge Cabernet Sauvignon (Coastal Region); \$13. Dark and moody, with aromas of bramble, blackberry, coffee grinds and cocoa powder. The medium-weight mouth is loaded with black plum and cherry flavors with a soft black pepper finish. Drink now. Imported by Vineyard Brands. —L.B.

87 Lynx 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (Franschhoek); \$20. Surprisingly light and vibrant smelling with aromas of raspberry, red plum skin and iris. A touch of pepper and cocoa unfold on the finish. Approachable and a good choice for a beef pot-luck dinner with friends. Drink now. Imported by Southern Starz, Inc. —L.B.

86 MAN Vintners 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon (Coastal Region); \$11. Accessible and available, this is a great value wine that's perfectly suited to grilled steak dinners with friends. Juicy dark fruit dominates the palate, with accents of bittersweet chocolate and peppery spice glimmering on the back of finish. Imported by Vineyard Brands. *Best Buy.* —L.B.

86 Roodeberg 2007 Red (Western Cape); \$13. A touch green and herbal with notes of black plum, black currant leaf, a touch of pepper and used coffee grinds. Medium weight in the mouth with assertive tannins and a sweet smoke-infused finish. Imported by Opici Wines. —L.B.

86 Saronga 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon (Paarl); \$10. Earthy notes of tree bark and licorice root lift the cassis and black plum aromas and flavors. Simple but well structured with medium tannins and a solid finish. Imported by MJM Imports. *Best Buy.* —L.B.

85 Rietvallei Estate Wine 2009 John B. Cabernet Sauvignon-Tinta Barocca (Robertson); \$9. An interesting blend of 55% Cabernet Sauvignon and 45% Tinta Barocca, this is a light and fruit-forward wine that's easy pleasing and very drinkable. Notes of red berries and plum unfold throughout, with a touch of smoke on the finish. Imported by Confluence Wine Importers. *Best Buy.* —L.B.

84 Makulu 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (Western Cape); \$6. Accents of mint and bay leaves integrate with the jammy black berry and cassis aromas. More plum and pepper flavors appear in the mouth, and stay through to the spicy finish. Drink up. Imported by Prestige Wine Group. *Best Buy.* —L.B.

PINOTAGE

90 Beyerskloof 2007 Diesel Pinotage (Stellenbosch); \$NA. A beautiful example of 100% Pinotage. Gorgeous aromas of cassis, black berry and plum abound from this deep red wine. Firmly structured but approachable with the potential to age gracefully another three to five years. Unsweetened cocoa and concentrated dark fruit linger through the lengthy finish. Imported by Cape Wine Match. —L.B.

90 Bosman Family Vineyards 2008 Pinotage (Wellington); \$45. Riper and richer than most Pinotage, with loads of decadent berry preserves, caramel sauce and melted dark chocolate aromas. The lushness carries through to the mouth, with a round mouthfeel full of dark fruit with accents of leather and cigar box. The peppery finish leaves a satisfying spicy note lingering in your mouth through the close. Imported by MJM Imports. —L.B.

88 Backsberg 2008 Pinotage (Coastal Region); \$14. Black berry and plum aromas hit you first, followed by backnotes of rubber and tobacco ash. Soft on the palate with ripe dark fruit and fine-grain tannins. A touch of coffee and sweet cured meat appears on the end

of the finish. Drink now. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd. —L.B.

88 Lions Drift 2008 Silkbush Mountain Vineyards Pinotage (Breedekloof); \$15. There's a nice herbal earthiness here, giving a rustic and intriguing feel to this otherwise ripe, dark-fruit-dominant wine. Black plum, cherry and berry fill the midpalate, while tobacco and pepper spice take center stage on the finish. Approachable and lively now with good balance and soft tannins. Imported by South Atlantic Wines. —L.B.

88 Southern Right 2008 Pinotage (Walker Bay); \$27. Superbly full and heady, the ripe black plum and dark raspberry notes mingle seamlessly with accents of spiced cigar tobacco and graham cracker crumbs throughout. The mouthfeel could use a bit more heft, but the finish is clean and satisfying. Balanced, soft and ready to drink now. Imported by Vineyard Brands. —L.B.

87 Neethlingshof 2008 The Short Story Collection The Owl Post Pinotage (Stellenbosch); \$25. With the Owl Post being a reference to their preferred method of pest management, this is a welcome new release from Neethlingshof. Notes of purple flowers, black cherry, fudgy brownie and soft lanolin appear in the bouquet and medium-weight mouth. Balanced acidity and soft tannins linger through to the solid finish. Drink now. Imported by Cape Legends. —L.B.

83 Ernst Gouws & Co. 2008 Pinotage (Coastal Region); \$11. Soft and easy to drink with mild aromas of red plum skin, wet ash and a touch of sweet spice on the end. Short but accessible and to the point. Drink now. Imported by Vinum International. —L.B.

SHIRAZ

90 Saxenburg Estate 2006 Private Collection Shiraz (Stellenbosch); \$20. Dark and wild, aromas of black berry and raspberry are intertwined with notes of whole tobacco leaf, sweet spice and a hint of licorice on the nose. The palate is lush and concentrated, loaded with more dark fruit flavors that are lifted by accents of white pepper, smoked meat and a mocha-infused finish. Balanced and decadent

BUYING GUIDE

with an overall creaminess. Imported by MJM Imports. **Editors' Choice.** —L.B.

89 Backsberg 2007 Pumphouse Shiraz (Coastal Region); \$22. With 16 months in French and American oak, it should not be a surprise that this wine is as rich and wonderfully wood-spiced as it is. Earthy spice by way of clove, cinnamon sticks, anise root and cigar box bring the typical dark fruit flavors to another level. Balanced and drinkable now with a finish reminiscent of a tanned hide. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd. —L.B.

88 De Grendel 2007 Shiraz (Durbanville); \$18. This is quite a meaty Shiraz, with dominating characteristics of smoked game and bacon slabs. But the raspberry sauce, blueberry and plum fruit flavors keep things from getting too wild, filling the palate alongside accents of smoky pepper. The tannins are dusty but dissipate slowly on the finish, making this a tasty and easy-drinking but interesting selection. Imported by MJM Imports. —L.B.

86 Bosman Family Vineyards 2008 Adama (Wellington); \$18. Red berries, bramble, sweet spice and a touch of caramel are the core of this wine. Medium weight in the mouth with soft tannins and a short, clean finish. Imported by MJM Imports. —L.B.

86 DeWaal 2009 Young Vines Shiraz (Stellenbosch); \$11. Tasty and satisfying, especially for the price, with notes of plum flesh, strawberry and blueberry in the nose and mouth. Lean but so drinkable with soft mocha and pepper spice unfolding on the solid finish. Drink now. Imported by Worthwhile Wine Company. **Best Buy.** —L.B.

85 Raka 2007 Biography Shiraz (Klein River); \$17. A soft vanilla bean accent shines through the moderate aromas of red cherry and strawberry. Hints of game and cola unfold on the palate, fighting their way through the medium finish. Imported by Cape Ardor LLC. —L.B.

85 Rooiberg 2009 Shiraz (Robertson); \$10. This is a clean and easy-drinking Shiraz loaded with ripe fruit flavors of raspberry and blueberry alongside a hint of mocha. Medium weight with soft tannins and a fleck of pepper on the finish. Imported by Worthwhile Wine Company. **Best Buy.** —L.B.

84 Indaba 2009 Shiraz (Western Cape); \$10. Red berry preserves and plum guts lead the way on this easy-going Shiraz. Soft tannins and ripe fruit flavors continue the soft impression of this wine, ending with a short but clean finish. Drink now. Imported by Cape Classics. —L.B.

84 Tall Horse 2009 Shiraz (Western Cape); \$9. Here's a short and simple Shiraz that goes down easy with fleshy berry and red plum flavors. There's a hint of earthiness and to the bouquet, and the palate is soft and approachable with low tannins and acidity. Imported by Cape Wine Ventures. —L.B.

OTHER RED WINES

91 Ataraxia 2007 Serenity (Western Cape); \$30. A gorgeous and elegant compositionally undisclosed red blend from winemaker Kevin Grant, this has all the finesse and complexity of a great wine. Bright and inviting with juicy red plum, blueberry, and wild raspberry aromas and flavors laced with hints of smoky, woody spice and minerality. Silky in the mouth with fine tannins and a long, nuanced finish. Drink now. Imported by Worthwhile Wine Company. —L.B.

90 Doolhof 2007 Minotaur (Wellington); \$65. A limited production wine (only 3,440 bottles produced) that has the depth and concentration one would expect for a wine with this price tag. Dark and floral with aromas of crushed African violets, black plum, cherry and clover. The mouth is lush and velvety, loaded with flavors of cassis, black berry, pepper and leathery spice that continue through the finish. Drink now through 2015. Imported by Worthwhile Wine Company. —L.B.

90 Ken Forrester 2007 The Gypsy Grenache-Syrah (Western Cape); \$65. Silky and seductive with notes of raspberry, red cherry, blueberry and earthy forrest aromas. The finish shows a sweet mocha accent through the dominant fruit flavors. Balanced and approachable with well-integrated tannins and a strong finish. Imported by Cape Classics. —L.B.

89 Lammershoek 2006 Roulette (Swartland); \$40. This is an attractive but focused wine with loads of juicy red plum guts, mashed raspberry and blackberry preserve

flavors framing licorice and sweet spice back notes. Robust and spicy with a strong cocoa flavored finish. Imported by Worthwhile Wine Company. —L.B.

88 Glenelly 2007 Grand Vin de Glenelly (Western Cape); \$25. Black berry, raspberry and cassis abound on the bouquet of this wine, lifted by superattractive aromas of fudgy brownie. The fruit transitions completely to the full palate, with a touch of peppery spice staying through the close. Drink now. Imported by Cape Classics. —L.B.

87 Black Pearl 2007 Oro Shiraz-Cabernet Sauvignon (Paarl); \$20. Forward and easy to drink with notes of cherry, cassis, purple florals and a touch of fresh coffee grinds in the bouquet. The mouthfeel is plump and rich with flavors of currant and licorice staying through the finish. Drink now. Imported by Southern Starz, Inc. —L.B.

87 Ken Forrester 2006 Shiraz-Grenache (Western Cape); \$22. Almost 50-50, this is a gamy and earthy wine with a strong herbality present among the bright red fruit and *sous-bois* aromas and flavors. Flecks of dried oregano and plum skins linger on the close. Drink now. Imported by Cape Classics. —L.B.

87 Post House 2008 Blueish Black (Stellenbosch); \$11. A terrific value red blend of 32% Shiraz, 32% Pinotage, 18% Merlot and 18% Cab Sauv, loaded with fleshy fruit flavors of black plum, cherry and berry laced with hints of coffee grinds and earthy spice. The fine tannins and overall soft structure make this an easy drinker perfect for company. Imported by Terry Seitz. **Best Buy.** —L.B.

87 Spier 2006 Vintage Selection Shiraz-Mourvèdre-Viognier (Coastal Region); \$18. Foliage and black pepper adds complexity to the strong raspberry, red plum and strawberry characteristics of this wine. It's straightforward but enjoyable with gentle tannins and a smoky, bacon-nuanced finish. Drink now. Imported by Indigo Wine Group. —L.B.

86 Beyerskloof 2007 Synergy Cape Blend (Stellenbosch); \$18. An interesting and fruit-forward Cape blend composed of 57% Pinotage, 23% Shiraz, 14% Cab Sauv and 6% Merlot. Kirsch and red plum along with subtle accents of rubber and tar fill the profile. Soft

and quite easygoing with low tannins and a short finish. Imported by Cape Wine Match. —L.B.

86 Goats do Roam Wine Co. 2008 (Western Cape); \$10. An easy-drinking Rhône-style red blend with a fun name and a great attitude. Small red berries, plum skins and soft strawberries abound on the nose and mouth, and the structure is plump and juicy with low tannins and zippy acidity. Drink now. Imported by Vineyard Brands. *Best Buy.* —L.B.

86 Sebeka 2008 Cape Blend Shiraz-Pinotage (Western Cape); \$8. With 58% Shiraz and 42% Pinotage, this is an accessible and enjoyable Cape blend with vibrant notes of black berry, all-fruit preserves, root beer and a soft touch of caramel sauce. Cherry and fleshy plum fill the mouth, and a kiss of vanilla lingers on the close. Imported by Sebeka Wines. *Best Buy.* —L.B.

81 The Royal Valley Vineyards Wine Company 2009 Shiraz-Cabernet Sauvignon (Swartland); \$10. Soft and a bit lean in the mouth, with muted notes of red plum and raspberry Jolly Rancher candy. Imported by Kysela Père et Fils. —L.B.

SOUTH AFRICA WHITE WINES

CHARDONNAY

91 Danie de Wet 2007 Bateleur Chardonnay (Robertson); \$50. This is a stellar example of how to do South African Chard right. Delicate white florals and a firm minerality mingle with fruit notes of Gala apple and Anjou pear. The mouth is weighty but not flabby and a soft sweet woody spice lingers on the long finish. Imported by Worthwhile Wine Company. —L.B.

90 Glen Carlou 2008 Quartz Stone Chardonnay (Paarl); \$45. This is a top-end Chard from a very reputable producer. Sweet custardy notes of mango, pear and melon transition from the nose to mouth seamlessly, with accents of hazelnut and orange oil adding complexity to the long finish. Full and lusty with an overall decadent feel; drink now. Imported by Hess Collection. —L.B.

89 Hartenberg 2006 The Eleanor Chardonnay (Stellenbosch); \$53. There's a real richness to this wine, as aromas of butter and cream flood the nose alongside notes of ripe peach and apple. The mouthfeel is as full and lush as one would anticipate from the bouquet, and the finish is long but clean. Drink now. Imported by Terry Seitz. —L.B.

88 Bouchard Finlayson 2008 Crocodile's Lair Chardonnay (Walker Bay); \$20. There's a distinct flinty, mineral sharpness to the nose, adding complexity to the melon, green apple and Anjou pear aromas. Medium weight but textured, the apple skin and toast flavors linger endlessly on the finish. Drink now. Imported by Terry Seitz. —L.B.

88 Hartenberg 2008 Chardonnay (Stellenbosch); \$27. Light buttery and grilled peach aromas mingle with softer notes of pear and orange rind. The full weight mouth offers more hazelnut and graham cracker flavors that stick all the way through the close. Round but balanced and not overdone. Imported by Terry Seitz. —L.B.

88 Juno 2008 Art House Chardonnay-Viognier (Coastal Region); \$16. With 25% Viognier added to this Chard, there are a lot of floral characteristics adding complexity to the nose and mouth. Roasted apple, orange blossom and almond skin round out the mouth, while a touch of Earl Grey tea pleasantly unfolds on the finish. Drink now. Imported by Confluence Wine Importers. —L.B.

88 Thelema 2008 Sutherland Chardonnay (Elgin); \$15. Remarkably well balanced and easy to drink with soft toast, grilled peach and Red Delicious apple throughout. The finish has a distinct nuttiness to it, seeming almost sweet and spicy all at once. Drink now. Imported by Cape Classics. —L.B.

87 Glen Carlou 2008 Chardonnay (Paarl); \$16. Here's a riper expression of South African Chardonnay with forward aromas and flavors of baked pear, apple cider and walnut skins that linger through the buttery finish. Round and full in the mouth but not flabby. Drink now. Imported by Hess Collection. —L.B.

87 Hartenberg 2007 Chardonnay (Stellenbosch); \$28. Chalky but ripe with red pear, melon and yellow floral compo-

nents throughout. Medium weight and balanced with a clean, toasted almond milk infused finish. Drink now. Imported by Terry Seitz. —L.B.

87 Saxenburg Estate 2008 Private Collection Chardonnay (Stellenbosch); \$20. Beautiful aromas of lightly toasted red apple skins, peach pit and pineapple core draw you in immediately, while the ripe fruit flavors in the medium weight mouth keep you invested. Moderately intense and balanced, this would be a lovely match for roasted chicken. Imported by MJM Imports. —L.B.

86 KWV 2008 Cathedral Cellar Chardonnay (Western Cape); \$17. This is an easy pleaser with typical Chard flavors of ripe red apple and pear accented by toast. There's a hint of beeswax in the bouquet, while the nutty oak notes linger through the solid finish. Imported by Opici Wines. —L.B.

86 Morgenhof 2008 Fantail Unwooded Chardonnay (Western Cape); \$12. This Chard might be unwooded, but it's not short on character. Medium weight with solid ripe apple and pear flavors partnered with interesting accents of honeysuckle and pineapple. Straightforward and simple but very easy to enjoy. Imported by Terry Seitz. —L.B.

82 Ernst Gouws & Co. 2008 Chardonnay (Coastal Region); \$11. Honeyed and a bit mealy with mushy flavors of mango and guava in the medium-weight mouth. Drink now. Imported by Vinum International. —L.B.

SAUVIGNON BLANC

89 Ataraxia 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Western Cape); \$20. This is a gorgeous Sauvignon Blanc with notes of sweet pea, honeydew, gooseberry and lemon rind citrus. Medium weight with assertive acidity and a vibrant, mouth-watering finish. Try with lemon roasted chicken or grilled swordfish. Imported by Worthwhile Wine Company. —L.B.

88 Southern Right 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Walker Bay); \$19. The mouthfeel of this wine is so full and weighty that one might never guess that it's a South African Sauvignon Blanc. On the nose, glimmers of baby powder and chamomile mingle with soft notes of honeydew rind and crisp apple. The limey finish

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seals the deal nicely, like a comforting signature. Imported by Vineyard Brands. —L.B.

87 Buitenverwachting 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Constantia); \$15. There's a nice complexity to this wine with hints of chalk, fresh honeysuckle and a touch of green pepper spice among the typical sweet grass and citrus characteristics. Balanced with appropriately assertive acidity and a crisp but lingering finish. Imported by Cape Classics. —L.B.

87 Groot Constantia 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Constantia); \$20. Medium intense aromas of green fig, hard peach and fresh herbs dominate the bouquet, and the riper fruit flavors continue on the fleshy palate. The weight is lifted by accents of clementine citrus that shines through on the close. Drink now. Imported by Indigo Wine Group. —L.B.

87 Lomond 2009 Pincushion Vineyard Sauvignon Blanc (Cape Agulhas); \$25. There's a very cool minerality on the nose of this wine, followed by notes of green fruit, white currant and fresh hay on the nose and mouth. Medium weight in the mouth with bracing acidity and a clean, lingering finish. Imported by Cape Legends.—L.B.

87 Partnership Vineyards 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Western Cape); \$12. The bouquet immediately draws you in with aromas of sweet pea florals, fresh grass, ripe gooseberry and preserved Meyer lemon. The medium-weight mouth offers slightly riper nuances of stone fruit but ends with a tangy citrus-infused finish. Imported by Worthwhile Wine Company. **Best Buy.** —L.B.

86 Beau Joubert 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Stellenbosch); \$13. Here's a bright Sauvignon Blanc with appealing accents of baby powder and orange blossom running through the dominant nectarine and tangerine aromas and flavors. The mouth is surprisingly round but the finish is mouthwatering and clean. Imported by Metrowine Distribution. —L.B.

86 Bouchard Finlayson 2009 Edgebaston Sauvignon Blanc (Stellenbosch); \$15. Here's a clean, racy white with aromas of green gooseberry, wet grass and lemon rind. Balanced in the mouth with a juicy finish. Imported by Southern Starz, Inc. —L.B.

86 Hartenberg 2008 Sauvignon Blanc (Stellenbosch); \$28. Forward citrus is lifted by accents of thyme and green melon rind in the bouquet. White cranberry and lime pith unfold in the medium-weight mouth and linger through the finish. Imported by Terry Seitz. —L.B.

86 Iona Vineyards 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Elgin); \$18. The entry starts off a bit green with notes of grass, green plum and a touch of pepper. The mouthfeel is light and lean but offers loads of fresh citrus flavors by way of tart orange supremes and lime rind. The bracing finish and prickly texture make this an easy-drinking choice. —L.B.

86 KWV 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Western Cape); \$11. Sweet notes of orange marmalade, kiwi and green grass keep the leaner notes of gooseberry and pineapple acidity from being too tart. There's the impression of effervescence in the mouth with vibrant tropical fruit flavors lingering through the finish. Imported by Opici Wines. **Best Buy.** —L.B.

86 Makulu 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Western Cape); \$6. A terrific value: Bright citrus, soft grass and a touch of hard white peach dominate the nose and mouth. Balanced, clean, and very easy to drink. Try with fresh grilled fish or crab cakes. Imported by Prestige Wine Group. **Best Buy.** —L.B.

86 Neil Ellis 2009 Sincerely Sauvignon Blanc (Western Cape); \$14. This is a lean, easy-to-drink Sauvignon Blanc with traditional flavors of green gooseberry and sharp lime citrus. Herbal thyme and fresh hay aromas add complexity to the nose, while the wine closes on a slightly bitter pith note. Drink up. Imported by Vineyard Brands. —L.B.

86 Simonsig 2009 Sunbird Sauvignon Blanc (Western Cape); \$14. This wine smells immediately fresh and tart, with scents of green plum, gooseberry, hard nectarine and straw filling the nose. The leanness continues in the mouth with citrus flavors leading thorough to the clean but lingering finish. Imported by Quintessential Wines. —L.B.

86 Stellenbosch Hills 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Stellenbosch); \$12. Mild yellow peach, citrus and white floral aromas appear on the nose, and a similarly nuanced intensity of

flavors continues in the mouth. Clean and soft, this wine is remarkably easy to drink and should match well with lighter fare. Imported by Cape Wine Match. —L.B.

85 Le Bonheur 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Simonsberg-Stellenbosch); \$12. Here's a riper, more tropical fruit infused Sauvignon Blanc with notes of mango, kiwi and yellow peach nectar. The rich fruit continues to dominate the palate, but the lemon-lime citrus finish livens things up on the end. Imported by Cape Legends.—L.B.

85 Raka 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Klein River); \$13. Watermelon rind, lime pith and green plum round out this wine's profile. The mouth is light and lean and the finish clean. Drink now. Imported by Cape Ardor LLC. —L.B.

85 Spier 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Western Cape); \$9. A soft minerality is matched with notes of sweet pea, white peach and green melon on the nose and mouth. Full but clean with a racy citrus finish. Imported by Indigo Wine Group. **Best Buy.** —L.B.

84 Ernst Gouws & Co. 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Stellenbosch); \$11. Lean but enjoyable with straightforward lemon citrus and green plum aromas and flavors. Drink now. Imported by Vinum International.—L.B.

CHENIN BLANC

88 Simonsig 2009 Chenin Blanc (Stellenbosch); \$12. Bright and fruity with elements of pear, melon, mango and sweet green grass. The medium-weight mouth is fresh and lively with bracing acidity that leads through to the crisp but lengthy finish. Imported by Quintessential Wines. **Best Buy.** —L.B.

86 DeWaal 2009 Young Vines Chenin Blanc (Stellenbosch); \$11. Orange citrus dominates the medium-intense bouquet, but secondary aromas of green apple, melon rind, hard nectarine and a touch of honeysuckle appear upon deeper inhalation. Solidly structured with a vibrant mouth and an apple core flavored finish. Imported by Worthwhile Wine Company. **Best Buy.** —L.B.

86 Dornier 2009 Donatus White (Western Cape); \$22. Donatus, Latin

for *Gift from God*, is a blend of 77% Chenin Blanc and 23% Semillon. Soft tropical fruit, orange, melon rind and a hint of oak unfold on the nose, while the lively light-weight mouth offers more fresh tropical fruit and pineapple acidity. Balanced and easy to drink. Imported by Worthwhile Wine Company. —L.B.

86 Spier 2009 Chenin Blanc (Western Cape); \$8. A fantastic value for an easy-pleasing white loaded with Golden Delicious apple, clementine citrus and watermelon rind flavors. Clean and tart but delicious and refreshing. Drink now. Imported by Indigo Wine Group. **Best Buy.** —L.B.

85 Stellenbosch Hills 2009 Chenin Blanc (Stellenbosch); \$10. A solid, straightforward selection that smells like a lime gummy bear with accents of lime leaf and soft tropical fruit. Vibrant and refreshing with a zippy finish; drink now. Imported by Cape Wine Match. **Best Buy.** —L.B.

AUSTRIA

RED WINES

93 Weninger 2007 Alte Reben Red (Burgenland); \$35. A complex, concentrated wine. It shows richness as well as tense minerality, the ripe black berry flavors melding with firm tannins. Alte Reben is old vines, impressive and designed for aging. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd. **Cellar Selection.** —R.V.

94 Weninger 2007 Dürrau Cuvée Blaufränkisch (Burgenland); \$84. This is Weninger's top wine, an impressive array of spice, black berry fruit, dusty tannins and layers of wood and acidity. There is weight and restrained power here, a dark structure. Age 5-6 years. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd. **Cellar Selection.** —R.V.

91 Weninger 2009 Hochäcker Blaufränkisch (Mittelburgenland); \$24. Plenty of spice, leather and tar aromas, followed by a juicy palate that is edged with dark, dusty, very dry tannins. It is finely balanced, the acidity showing attractive freshness, with a long, fruity aftertaste. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd. —R.V.

89 R&A Pfaffl 2008 Altenberg St. Laurent (Niederösterreich); \$44. Dense and firm, dark plum fruits and tight tannins frame this wine against its fruits and spice flavors. Although it is not a heavyweight, the intensity of flavors more than compensates. Imported by Palm Bay International. —R.V.

88 Weninger 2007 Merlot (Burgenland); \$52. Very soft, open wine. It is rich, with an opulent texture, while its tannins are a whisper among the ripe red berry fruits and sweetness. The acidity brings the wine attractively to a close. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd. —R.V.

86 Graf Hardegg 2007 Steinbügel Reserve Pinot Noir (Niederösterreich); \$35. A pale-colored wine, tasting of strawberry jam, soft tannins and acidity. It is certainly cool-climate Pinot Noir, in its light texture and likelihood of early drinking. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd. —R.V.

86 R&A Pfaffl 2009 Austrian Cherry Zweigelt (Niederösterreich); \$15. Yes, cherry is a good name for the red cherry flavors of this cheery wine. Soft tannins, plenty of forward fruit, balanced acidity. Delicious. Screw cap. Imported by Palm Bay International. —R.V.

GRÜNER VELTLINER

93 Forstreiter 2009 Grande Reserve Grüner Veltliner (Niederösterreich); \$NA. Impressively compact, complex wine. It has rich flavors of peach, spiced pear to go with the intense acidity that is under the full-bodied surface. It should be aged three years or more. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd. **Cellar Selection.** —R.V.

92 Forstreiter 2009 Tabor Reserve Die Raritāt Grüner Veltliner (Kremstal); \$NA. Big, serious, powerful wine, as complex as Grüner can be. It's powered by ripe apples and thyme, seasoned with pepper. The acidity sets the scene for a wine that can age. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd.—R.V.

91 Salomon-Undhof 2009 Lindberg Reserve Grüner Veltliner (Kremstal); \$48. While the aromas are luscious, what emerges on the palate is more austere, mineral in texture. The wine has a tight, nervy character, its

white fruit and spice flavors laced with tense acidity. It needs 3-4 years. Imported by Fruit of the Vines, Inc. **Cellar Selection.** —R.V.

90 Forstreiter 2009 Schiefer Reserve Grüner Veltliner (Kremstal); \$NA. A rich wine, full of peach and pineapple flavors, with an herbal, spicy edge. It's full in the mouth, the texture oily and unctuous. At the end, the pepper character thrusts out of the glass. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd.—R.V.

90 Graf Hardegg 2009 Vom Schloss Grüner Veltliner (Niederösterreich); \$18. Von Schloss means that the wine comes from the Hardegg castle vineyards. A rich and complex wine, its creamed apple flavors given point by pineapple acidity. It has weight, ripe fruits, a hint of spice and a round, full texture on the finish. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd.—R.V.

90 Salomon-Undhof 2009 Von Stein Reserve Grüner Veltliner (Kremstal); \$55. Aromas of peach and mango waft from the glass. This is a rich wine, although dry, with a smooth, almost oily texture. Its ripe fruit is intense, with the yellow fruit flavors dominating acidity and pepper. It could age for several years. Imported by Fruit of the Vines, Inc. —R.V.

89 Graf Hardegg 2009 Steinbügel Reserve Grüner Veltliner (Niederösterreich); \$27. From vines close to the Czech border, this wine is soft and yeasty in character, with juicy fruit, a ripe texture, citrus and bell pepper flavors. Age for 2-3 years. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd. —R.V.

89 Salomon-Undhof 2009 Wachtberg Grüner Veltliner (Kremstal); \$28. A tightly textured wine, packed with acidity. Its grapefruit and green apple fruit lend a lively character layered with grainy acidity. There is a final touch of pepper and yeast. Imported by Fruit of the Vines, Inc.—R.V.

88 Forstreiter 2009 Kremser Kögl Bergwein Grüner Veltliner (Kremstal); \$NA. An attractive wine, its fruit in the white currants and pear juice category. The acidity is finely integrated into this ripe fruit, with a warm, rich core. It's ready to drink, but the acidity will help it age. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd.—R.V.

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88 Graf Hardegg 2009 Grüner Veltliner (Niederösterreich); \$13. Typical pepper and spice flavors mark this wine as a classic, fresh, ready-to-drink Grüner. It's all about bright acidity and hints of minerality. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd. **Best Buy.** —R.V.

88 Salomon-Undhof 2009 Wieden-berg Grüner Veltliner (Kremstal); \$25. A wine that brings out characteristic pepper flavors to spice up the smooth white fruits. There is a crisp citrus element along with apple skins. Ready to drink now. Imported by Fruit of the Vines, Inc.—R.V.

87 R&A Pfaffl 2009 Austrian Pepper Grüner Veltliner (Niederösterreich); \$15. A wine that is pure, quaffable pleasure. There is no complexity, just clean, soft pear and pepper flavored fruit. The acidity is finely integrated into this ripe, mouthwatering wine. Imported by Palm Bay International. —R.V.

86 Graf Hardegg 2009 Veltlinsky Grüner Veltliner (Niederösterreich); \$13. A soft, creamy wine, lightly textured with pear and apple juice flavors. It's immediately attractive, a delicious wine for apéritifs. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd.—R.V.

85 Forstreiter 2009 Grooner Grüner Veltliner (Niederösterreich); \$NA. Created for the American market, this wine does everything a fresh, lively Grüner Veltliner is supposed to. Light and ripe, with green apples and lime juice. Screwcap. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd. —R.V.

85 Salomon-Undhof 2009 Hochtterrassen Grüner Veltliner (Niederösterreich); \$17. Light, fresh and bright, this is a delicious green-fruit wine, touched by pepper. The acidity dances through the wine, leaving a lively aftertaste. Imported by Fruit of the Vines, Inc.—R.V.

RIESLING

93 Forstreiter 2009 Schiefer Reserve Riesling (Kremstal); \$NA. An impressive, ageworthy Riesling. It shows great depth of flavor, its intense, biting acidity shooting through the green apple and plum fruits. Very nervy, minerally and taut. Designed for longterm

aging. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd. **Cellar Selection.**—R.V.

93 Metternich-Salomon 2009 Pfaffenberg Reserve Riesling (Kremstal); \$55. A smooth, cream-textured wine, just given an edge by a spice and yeast character. The wine offers layers of acidity, white fruits, crisp apples rounded out by its richness. For aging over 4–5 years, probably more. Imported by Fruit of the Vines, Inc. **Cellar Selection.**—R.V.

91 Graf Hardegg 2005 Spätlese Reserve Vom Schloss Riesling (Niederösterreich); \$37. A medium-sweet wine, balancing ripe fruits with a delicious layer of acidity. The black currant fruits, tarragon and taut acidity balance the rich sweetness. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd.—R.V.

91 Salomon-Undhof 2009 Pfaffenberg Riesling (Kremstal); \$35. Rich Riesling, very perfumed, with flavors of yellow creamed fruits over a steely core giving structure. It has weight, the ripe fruit powering through the edgy final texture. A wine for aging. Imported by Fruit of the Vines, Inc. **Cellar Selection.**—R.V.

91 Salomon-Undhof 2009 Steiner Kögl Reserve Riesling (Kremstal); \$28. Reserve wines from Kremstal offer a rich character and this wine, with its intense ripe yellow fruits, fits the bill. It does have an edge of steel and minerality, although its round, creamy style is likely to emerge more as it ages. Imported by Fruit of the Vines, Inc.—R.V.

90 Graf Hardegg 2009 Vom Schloss Riesling (Niederösterreich); \$18. With beautiful purity of fruit from the biodynamic Hardegg vineyards, this is a perfumed, apples and currant flavored wine. Light, airy, it dances on the palate, a lovely cool-climate Riesling. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd. —R.V.

90 Salomon-Undhof 2009 Steinterrassen Riesling (Kremstal); \$23. Great ripe fruits here, peach and apricot flavors layered with intense white currant acidity. The wine has an edgy feel to it, its acidity bright and taut. Give the wine a year for its elements to blend together. Imported by Fruit of the Vines, Inc. —R.V.

89 Salomon-Undhof 2009 Undhof Kögl Riesling (Kremstal); \$28. An attractive, fresh-faced wine, bubbling brightly and easily. With light white fruits and laced with acidity, it brings out a racy, nervy character, looking to food as a complement. Imported by Fruit of the Vines, Inc. —R.V.

ZIERFANDLER

93 Stadlmann 2009 Mandel-Höh Zierfandler (Thermenregion); \$NA. Elegant, crisp wine from a single vineyard, edged with minerality as well as ripe pear and pineapple flavors. There is a spicy character with touches of almonds and tense acidity. Age for several years. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd. **Cellar Selection.** —R.V.

92 Stadlmann 2007 Grosse Reserve Zierfandler (Thermenregion); \$NA. This is an impressive, big, burly wine. Sweet with a rich fee; flavors of ripe lychee and pear flavors are laced with spice. Powerful and weighty, drink this by itself as a wine for contemplation. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd.—R.V.

91 Stadlmann 2008 Mandel-Höh Zierfandler (Thermenregion); \$NA. Poised, ripe wine that revels in its richness allied to a tight texture of apples skins, white currants and juicy acidity. An edge of pepper gives extra interest and brings out the dry nature of the wine. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd. —R.V.

OTHER WHITE WINES

90 Stadlmann 2009 Tagelsteiner Rotgipfler (Thermenregion); \$NA. A rounded, creamy, spicy wine that brings out the Rotgipfler's full-bodied character. The wine has an edgy acidity that cuts its richness. Impressive wine, with a feeling of concentration. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd.—R.V.

88 Stadlmann 2008 Höfen Weissburgunder (Thermenregion); \$NA. From 45-year-old vines, this Pinot Blanc is a smooth, charming wine. It may be that its richness is more prominent than its structure, giving a wine that, even with its weight, becomes an

apéritif style. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd.—R.V.

SPARKLING WINES

88 Graf Hardegg 2004 Extra Brut Burgundersekt (Osterreichischer Sekt); \$23. A blend of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay with some years of bottle aging has produced a sophisticated wine, pushing acidity and citrus flavors and a dancing sparkling character. Aromatic and very crisp. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd.—R.V.

SW FRANCE RED WINES

CAHORS

94 Jean-Luc Baldès 2007 Clos Triguédina Les Petites Cailles (Cahors); \$30. The third and most impressive wine in a series of single-vineyard wines, from the 900-foot plateau above the river Lot Valley. This is a wine to age, very mineral in character and very structured, with tight tannins. Keep for six years and more. Imported by Misa Imports. *Cellar Selection.* —R.V.

93 Château la Caminade 2008 La Commandery (Cahors); \$22. Toasty aromas are followed by intense black plum fruits twisted with tannins and polished with wood. It's an impressive, powerful wine, with a complex structure. Firm at this stage, it need 4–5 years at least to age. Imported by Wine Traditions. *Cellar Selection.* —R.V.

93 Château la Caminade 2006 L'Esprit de Caminade (Cahors); \$NA. Aged in large wood barrels, this is a big, powerful wine with medicinal, herbal aromas and a polished feel. The dark plums and bitter coffee give a rich aftertaste. Age for 5–6 years. Imported by Wine Traditions. —R.V.

93 Jean-Luc Baldès 2007 Clos Triguédina Les Galets (Cahors); \$30. With its firm, black fruits, this is a very chunky wine, mineral in character. It has tension, with tannins layered with intense flavors, very structured. It needs aging. One of a series of single-vineyard

wines created by Jean-Luc Baldès. Imported by Misa Imports. *Cellar Selection.* —R.V.

93 Jean-Luc Baldès 2008 Clos Triguédina The New Black Wine (Cahors); \$60. Made using an adaptation of a Cahors tradition of warming the must before fermentation to increase stability as well as color. The result is immensely powerful tannins, chocolate density and a youthful bitter edge at this stage. Imported by Eagle Eye Imports. —R.V.

92 Château Eugénie 2005 Cuvée Réserve de l'Aièul (Cahors); \$22. While it certainly is tannic, the wine also has bold fruit, full of black berry and sweet jam flavors. That makes this balanced, although when the tannins are going to soften is unsure. Decant before serving. Imported by The Wine Company. —R.V.

92 Château la Coustarelle 2006 Grande Cuvée Prestige (Cahors); \$30. Well balanced, bringing together its firm, youthful tannins with ripe jammy fruits and great swathes of spice and chocolate. It needs aging, but it is an impressive wine. Imported by Charles Neal Selections. *Cellar Selection.* —R.V.

92 Domaine les Roques de Cana 2007 Sanguis Christi (Cahors); \$20. The name of the wine obviously comes from the Catholic mass, but it's also inspired by the ancient origins of the Cahors vineyards. The wine itself is smooth, polished and mint flavored, the tannins ripe and juicy. Wood rounds out the natural Malbec tannins. Imported by Michael Corso Selections. *Editors' Choice.* —R.V.

92 Jean-Luc Baldès 2007 Clos Triguédina Au Coin du Bois (Cahors); \$30. From the second terrace level above the Lot River, this is a powerful as well as elegant single-vineyard wine. It's touched by bitter fruits, along with great acidity and a depth of tannins. Imported by Misa Imports. —R.V.

92 Le Clos d'un Jour 2007 Un Jour... (Cahors); \$NA. This is a big, black wine, intensely medicinal and herbal in character. It has powerful, extracted, dark tannins, emphasized by chocolate and spice flavors, as well as dark plums. Imported by Vineyard Research. —R.V.

91 Château de Chambert 2008 Cahors; \$18. A big, ripe, juicy wine,

threaded by tannins. It has an elegant structure, with bright black berry fruits to go with the layers of smoky wood and tannins. Age for 3–4 years. Imported by Monsieur Touton Selection Ltd. *Editors' Choice.* —R.V.

91 Château de Gaudou 2007 Réserve de Gaudou (Cahors); \$40. A dense wine, tannic and firmly structured. It's one of those wines that are not for the faint-hearted with its power, concentration and medicinal character. Age for several years. Imported by Wine Wine Situation LLC. *Cellar Selection.* —R.V.

91 Château Lamartine 2008 Cuvée Particulière (Cahors); \$NA. Densely tannic, a dry core overlaid by delicious, jammy flavors. Black and Damson plums, alongside roast coffee, go with acidity that pushes through at the end. Certainly for aging. Imported by T. Edward Wines Ltd. *Cellar Selection.* —R.V.

91 Château Nozières 2008 Cuvée Ambroise de l'Her (Cahors); \$18. A smooth wine, the tannins suspended within a velvet texture, resulting in an opulent, rich feel. This is very intense, with medicinal and dark plum skin flavors. Powerful, solid, for aging. Imported by Sevier Imports LLC. *Editors' Choice.* —R.V.

91 Georges Vigouroux 2008 Château de Haute-Serre (Cahors); \$NA. From a vineyard at one of the highest points in the Cahors vineyard (nearly 1,000 feet), this is a smoothly perfumed, wood-aged wine that shows light elegance, acidity as well as dark currant fruits and a touch of mint. Imported by Baron Francois Ltd. —R.V.

90 Château de Gaudou 2008 Renaissance (Cahors); \$21. Classic black-colored Malbec, very perfumed, its fruit polished by smooth tannins. On the palate, black damson and bitter chocolate flavors are present. It's a powerful wine, full of firm tannins, its dark edge softened by wood. Imported by Wine Wine Situation LLC. —R.V.

90 Château Gautoul 2005 Cahors; \$NA. Impressive wine, perfectly balancing its tannins and its stylish medicinal and herbal fruit flavors. It's juicy, with mouthfilling black currant flavors. A wine to age for several years, but likely to be drinkable, with softer tannins, in 2012. Imported by Vin de Garde Wines. —R.V.

BUYING GUIDE

90 Château Pineraie 2006 L'Authentique (Cahors); \$NA. Powerful and dark in color, with perfumed fruits, laden with tannins and sweet damsons, licorice and coffee. The acidity cuts through, bringing a fine edge to this rich and concentrated wine. Imported by David Vincent Selection. —R.V.

90 Georges Vigouroux 2008 Château de Mercuès (Cahors); \$NA. An intensely black-colored wine, with dark, smoky tannins to match. It does have a juicy, ripe sweet berry fruit element, laying under the surface tannins. With this power, it needs several years to develop. Imported by Baron Francois Ltd. —R.V.

90 Mas del Perié 2008 La Roque (Cahors); \$NA. Rich, firm, opulent and impressive. With this vintage, the wood element seems to have tamed and integrated, leaving an attractive edge of chocolate and coffee. Imported by Vintage '59 Imports. —R.V.

89 Lionel Osmin & Cie 2009 Malbec (Cahors); \$14. Mineral, firm wine, although at the same time it has plenty of black plum fruits surrounding the core of dark tannins. The resulting wine is one that manages to combine the structure of Cahors while bringing out a fruity character. Imported by Pierre Courdurie Selections. —R.V.

88 Château Combel la Serre 2007 Coeur de Cuvée (Cahors); \$19. Firmly tannic wine, spiced with acidity, black plum skins, damsons and tight black currants. It is attractively balanced, a real food wine, that will mature well in 3–4 years. Imported by North American Beverage Group. —R.V.

88 Château Haut-Monplaisir 2008 Cahors; \$NA. Very juicy wine, with tannins that gives shape to solid, chunky fruits. It is the ripe fruit and acidity that drive the bitter chocolate and smoky flavors. For medium-term aging. Imported by Vintage '59 Imports. —R.V.

88 Château la Caminade 2007 Tradition (Cahors); \$NA. This wine is driven by its ripe fruit, black currant and red cherry flavors. Fruit tannins give weight. Imported by Wine Traditions. —R.V.

88 Château la Coustarelle 2008 Tradition (Cahors); \$NA. There are lots of black berry fruits and acidity in this fruity wine.

A freshness presents itself alongside the delicious ripe fruits. Imported by Charles Neal Selections. —R.V.

88 Château les Croisille 2007 Cuvée Divin (Cahors); \$NA. Heavily toasty wood dominates this wine, making it one-dimensional. It has enough juicy fruit, although it will take at least six years for this to really makes its presence. Less wood would help the balance. Imported by USA Wine Imports. —R.V.

88 Georges Vigouroux 2007 Château de Haute-Serre (Cahors); \$NA. Finely balanced, with acidity and tannins firmly bedded in elegant, black currant fruits. The tannins very dry, though they do not dominate. This is a stylish wine for medium-term aging. Imported by Baron Francois Ltd. —R.V.

88 Mas del Perié 2009 Les Escures (Cahors); \$NA. Open, rich wine, from young vines, ripe with plum and spice, touch of bitterness, followed by a rich, full palate. Imported by Wine Traditions. —R.V.

87 Château Armandière 2004 Malbec Ancestral (Cahors); \$NA. An attractive, fruity wine with smoky flavors and dry tannins. The emphasis is on the balance between all these elements, producing a wine that cuts the fruit with acidity, while leaving dry tannins to finish. Imported by Wine Without Borders. —R.V.

87 Château du Cèdre 2009 Cèdre Héritage (Cahors); \$NA. A fruit-driven wine, young and fresh, its lively red berry fruits, touched lightly by tannins and acidity. Delicious, fruity wine. Imported by Martine's Wines. —R.V.

87 Château Famaey 2006 Cahors; \$13. With wood aging, firm dark tannins and definite toasty elements, this is a dark wine. It has elegant black fruits that are layered with acidity. The tannins, though, are still dense, and the wine needs time to come into balance. Imported by Gabriella Importers Inc. —R.V.

87 Clos Troteligotte 2007 La Perdrix (Cahors); \$20. Juicy, with flavors dominated by black currant acidity, edging on austere. The tannins are major here, very dry, adding to the severity. It needs some time, but it will always be cool and stalky. Imported by Fruit of the Vines, Inc. —R.V.

87 Pascal et Olivier Pieron 2009 Latitude 44 (Cahors); \$NA. Here's a wine with black plum flavors, acidity and an edge of tannins. A smooth texture dominates, leaving a delicious, ready-to-drink wine. Imported by Ararat Import/Export Co. LLC. —R.V.

86 Château Armandière 2008 Cahors; \$NA. A lighter, earthy style of Cahors, with attractive food-friendly red berry fruits and a core of tannins. There is a mineral character here, tightly woven over the fruit. Imported by OZ Wine Company. —R.V.

86 Château Bovila 2009 Malbec (Cahors); \$NA. A fruity Cahors, showing off black berry fruits and light acidity within an easy structure. The style is bright and ready to drink. Imported by Ararat Import/Export Co. LLC. —R.V.

86 Château de Gaudou 2009 Cahors; \$13. A very forward, juicy wine with soft tannins, black fruits and bright acidity. Drink now. Imported by Wine Wine Situation LLC. —R.V.

86 Domaine du Prince 2003 Lou Prince (Cahors); \$40. A big black wine that is powered by its tannins and dark fruits and raisins. The texture is open and soft, probably a product of the hot 2003 vintage. A lighter bottle would be an advantage. Imported by J. F. Wine Imports, Inc. —R.V.

86 Georges Vigouroux 2006 Antisto (Cahors); \$NA. One of a pair of comparative wines labeled Antisto. The other comes from Mendoza in Argentina. The Cahors version is lightly mineral, a soft wine feeling a little light in character. It does have the firm tannins and acidity of Cahors Malbec. Imported by Baron Francois Ltd. —R.V.

84 Château Combel la Serre 2008 Cuvée Prestige (Cahors); \$17. Lean, earthy, rustic wine, dominated by beetroot and black currant juice. Its tannins are a dusty core with acidity and berry fruit flavors around it. If the rustic character can blow off, it's an attractive, balanced wine. Imported by North American Beverage Group. —R.V.

82 Clos Siguier 2007 Cahors; \$NA. Curious fresh honey aromas are found on a wine that would be fresh and delicious if it

wasn't for the petrol edge and the red cabbage flavor. Imported by Jenny and François Selections. —R.V.

BERGERAC

89 Château la Rayre 2009 Premier Vin (Bergerac); \$20. A full and ripe wine that expresses the great 2005 vintage well. It is showing mature signs, with hints of dried fruits, raisins and spice over wood. The texture is dense, smooth, the layer of tannin blending well with the mature fruit. Imported by Bourgeois Family Selections. —R.V.

88 Château Tour des Gendres 2009 Le Classique (Bergerac); \$15. Rich and juicy, this warm wine benefits from the fine 2009 vintage. It has delicious black cherry, sweet tannins and acidity and a generous mouth feel. Not for aging but certainly delicious. Imported by Baron Francois Ltd. —R.V.

85 Château Bélingard 2009 Rosé (Bergerac); \$7. Shocking pink-colored wine, very soft and smooth. It has an almost sweet, full caramel character while still hitting the acidity button. Imported by Total Wine & More. —R.V.

OTHER RED WINES

91 Lionel Osmin & Cie 2008 Mon Adour (Madiran); \$17. A big, bold wine with fine acidity and firm dark black tannins. It has proper weight, richness as well as a big structure. The core is dense, mineral, tight. Drink now, but could age for several years. Imported by Pierre Courdurie Selections. —R.V.

88 Lionel Osmin & Cie 2009 Mansois (Marcillac); \$12. Firm wine, with tannins to match the chunky structure. Black currant fruits go with acidity, green pepper and spice. It's a delicious wine from an almost unknown appellation in the central mountains of France. Imported by Pierre Courdurie Selections. **Best Buy.** —R.V.

87 Château de Cénac 2009 Albatros Malbec (Vin de Pays du Lot); \$12. Here is a bold, fruity wine with soft tannins and big black cherry flavors. Pure juicy Malbec gives a balance of fruit cake and fresh berry acidity.

Drink now. Imported by North American Beverage Group. —R.V.

87 Lionel Osmin & Cie 2009 Duras et Braucol (Gaillac); \$12. There is a farmyard character here but it certainly doesn't detract from the light, fresh juicy cherry character. It's attractive, with bright acidity to finish. Imported by Pierre Courdurie Selections. **Best Buy.** —R.V.

84 Haut Marin 2009 Merlot (Vin de Pays des Côtes de Gascogne); \$11. A light-bodied, fresh red that has very gentle cherry fruit flavors. The acidity gives a fine final bite. Think about chilling slightly. Screwcap. Imported by Elite Wines Import. —R.V.

SW FRANCE WHITE WINES

BERGERAC

89 Château Tour des Gendres 2009 Cuvée des Conti (Bergerac Sec); \$18. The toast element is just right, giving a wine that is very rich, broad and opulent. At the same time, there is an edge of crispness as well as tropical fruits to add a final more vibrant character. Imported by Baron Francois Ltd. —R.V.

88 Château Tour des Gendres 2009 Le Classique (Bergerac Sec); \$15. Powerfully rich, creamy wine that has considerable yellow fruit flavors to broaden the pear juice. The wine is ripe, full, while the acidity is just an afterthought. Imported by Baron Francois Ltd. —R.V.

87 Château Bélingard 2009 Bergerac Sec; \$9. The aroma is intensely herbal, while the palate has a richer apricot and pear character. There is an attractive spice element from the Muscadelle in the blend, with acidity giving a final lift. Imported by Total Wine & More. **Best Buy.** —R.V.

84 Château la Rayre 2009 Bergerac Sec; \$15. Very herbaceous aromas are followed by a green, grassy flavor, feeling fat although with enough acidity. Pear and green plum fruits round out easily. It should have another few months in bottle. Imported by Bourgeois Family Selections. —R.V.

82 Château la Rayre 2009 Rosé (Bergerac); \$15. Almost garishly pink, this is soft, caramel-flavored rosé that feels full in the mouth. Pure strawberry fruits dominate, with only a light balancing acidity. Imported by Bourgeois Family Selections. —R.V.

GASCONY

88 Domaine du Tariquet 2009 Chardonnay (Vin de Pays des Côtes de Gascogne); \$NA. Full, ripe and creamy, an unctuous Chardonnay from one of the largest private estates in France. The wine features melon, a line of citrus and pure, bright acidity. Screwcap. Imported by Robert Kacher Imports. —R.V.

88 Domaine du Tariquet 2009 Chenin Blanc-Chardonnay (Vin de Pays des Côtes de Gascogne); \$NA. A wine that juxtaposes the acidity of Chenin with the richness of Chardonnay and ends up with a mellifluous whole. It is both apple crisp and melon ripe, lively and broad. And, as always, a great value. Imported by Robert Kacher Imports. —R.V.

88 Haut Marin 2009 Gros Manseng (Vin de Pays des Côtes de Gascogne); \$12. Sweet apple flavors fill this deliciously aromatic, off-dry wine. With the apples come white currants, white peach and a touch of honey. A pleasure to drink. Screwcap. Imported by Elite Wines Import. **Best Buy.** —R.V.

87 Haut Marin 2009 Cuvée Marine (Vin de Pays des Côtes de Gascogne); \$11. A delightfully soft and creamy wine with an herbaceous underlay. It has a rich, ripe quality, with melon as well as citrus, pure and crisp acidity and a final green herb buzz. Screwcap. Imported by Elite Wines Import. —R.V.

86 Producteurs Plaimont 2009 Colombelle Blanc Colombard (Vin de Pays des Côtes de Gascogne); \$9. From the leading cooperative in the Gascony region, this is a deliciously fruity, floral Colombard-dominated wine. Citrus, grapefruit and green herbaceousness all give the wine extreme, tasty crispness. Screwcap. Imported by Winesellers Ltd. **Best Buy.** —R.V.

85 Domaine du Grand Cros 2009 Jules Sauvignon Blanc-Colombard

(Vin de Pays des Côtes de Gascogne); \$12. Soft, easy apéritif-style wine, attractively perfumed, with some herbaceousness, the texture fresh as well as fat. Screwcap. Imported by The Barterhouse. —R.V.

85 Haut Marin 2009 Colombard-Sauvignon (Vin de Pays des Côtes de Gascogne); \$10. Pure fresh herbal fruit, deliciously light and herbaceous, this is a great, crisp wine, as fresh as the new day. Drink as an apéritif or with seafood. Screwcap. Imported by Elite Wines Import. —R.V.

85 Haut Marin 2009 Colombard-Ugni Blanc (Vin de Pays des Côtes de Gascogne); \$10. Despite the lower alcohol, this feels full in the mouth, softly textured, a product of the warm 2009 vintage. It is ripe, with green plums, lime and gooseberries. A good food wine, drink now. Screwcap. Imported by Elite Wines Import. —R.V.

85 Producteurs Plaimont 2009 Colombelle Rosé (Vin de Pays des Côtes de Gascogne); \$9. Red berry fruits dominate this crisp and bright rosé. There is a good touch of acidity keeping the soft texture dry, light, dancing. Screwcap. Imported by Wine-sellers Ltd. —R.V.

OTHER WHITE WINES

90 Lionel Osmin & Cie 2008 Foehn (Jurançon); \$24. Named after the dry wind that blows through the Jurançon vineyards, this light, poised sweet wine has typical freshness, the botrytis never cloying but immersed in currants, fresh apricots. The wine has a lively, buoyant, sweet character. Imported by Pierre Courdurie Selections. —R.V.

88 Domaine Rotier 2009 Initiales (Gaillac); \$13. Ripe and creamy, with tropical fruits that vie with gooseberry flavors, resulting in maximum freshness. There is an intriguing, herbal element, with thyme and basil adding to the delicious mix. Imported by Wineberry America LLC. **Best Buy.** —R.V.

88 Lionel Osmin & Cie 2009 Cami Salié (Jurançon Sec); \$17. There is weight here, powered by yellow fruits and a taut, linear texture. The feel is almost chalky, with acidity and a complex mouthfeel. The finish is

crisp and fresh. Imported by Pierre Courdurie Selections. —R.V.

LANGUEDOC-ROUSSILLON RED WINES

SWEET WINES

96 Gérard Bertrand 1929 Legend Vintage (Maury); \$380. With only 795 bottles produced, this is a special treat. Although it's ready to drink now, it has the structure and pedigree to age for decades. Loaded with rich nut and rancio flavors, there's so much going on; aromas of dried orange peel, gingerbread, toasted macadamia nut and a drizzle of molasses lead into flavors of dried red plum and fig dusted with Nutella powder and soft white pepper. Complex, spicy and full, with an endless finish. Imported by Gerard Bertrand USA. **Cellar Selection.** —L.B.

95 Gérard Bertrand 1945 Legend Vintage (Rivesaltes); \$350. For any serious fan of Rivesaltes, this is a must-have example. Aromas of dried apricot, toasted hazelnut, fig, ginger, sweet spice and candied orange rind fill the bouquet, while the mouth is silky and balanced—sweet and heady without being cloying. All of the aromas transition onto the palate alongside accents of walnut skins and shiitake mushroom. Soft salinity makes the long finish even more mouthwatering. Drink now, or continue to age. There are 869 bottles produced. Imported by Gerard Bertrand USA. **Cellar Selection.** —L.B.

93 Gérard Bertrand 1951 Legend Vintage (Banyuls); \$300. With just shy of 1,000 bottles produced, this will be hard to find. Dried fruit flavors of raspberry and red plum dominate the nose and mouth, while notes of sweet mulled spice, clove-pricked orange rind, pepper, walnut skin and bittersweet cocoa glimmer throughout. Full and rich but lively, with medium acidity and a zippiness to the finish. Enjoyable now, but this will benefit from another 5–10 years in the cellar. Imported by Gerard Bertrand USA. **Cellar Selection.** —L.B.

CORBIÈRES

94 Gérard Bertrand 2008 La Forge (Corbières-Boutenac); \$75. There's a strong mineral backbone to this wine, which alongside notes of *garrigue* (think lavender and bay leaves) and purple violet florals highlight this fantastic terroir. Black cherry, plum, licorice stick and black peppercorns flood the palate, while hints of used coffee grinds, cocoa powder and graham cracker crust appear on the seriously long finish. Creamy and decadent but balanced; easy to drink now but will age gracefully. Imported by Gerard Bertrand USA. **Editors' Choice.** —L.B.

93 Gérard Bertrand 2007 La Forge (Corbières-Boutenac); \$75. A gorgeous wine, dark and complex, with assertive leather and licorice spice throughout the boysenberry and bramble character. Touches of graham cracker, tobacco leaf and spice unfold in the mouth. Lush and decadent, with a lingering chocolate-raspberry finish. Enjoyable now, it could show more balance and finesse in 2–3 years. Imported by Gerard Bertrand USA. —L.B.

91 Château Maylandie 2007 Villa Ferrae (Corbières-Boutenac); \$NA. Accents of gamy animal and garrigue herbs in the form of dried thyme and bay leaves lift the bright fruit aromas of red berry preserves and fleshy plum guts. The structure is gorgeous, creamy and lush but textured like crushed velvet with firm but not overly gripping tannins. Black cherry pits and plum skins linger on the lengthy finish. Imported by Château Maylandie. —L.B.

88 Château Ollieux Romanis 2008 Cuvée Classique (Corbières); \$16. Thick, attractive fruit flavors of black cherry, raspberry and blueberry welcome you in immediately, with supporting notes of bay leaf and minerality in the background. Creamy and rich but balanced in the mouth, with more tasty dark fruit transitioning through to the wood-spice infused finish. Imported by Langdon Shiverick. —L.B.

87 Domaine des 2 Ânes 2008 Premier Pas (Corbières); \$15. Raspberry, rosemary and lavender coupled with soft wild barnyard notes make this Corbières stand apart from its peers as a more traditional offering from the region. The texture is smooth with soft tannins and strong acidity, with red cherry skin flavors

staying through the close. Imported by Jenny and François Selections.—L.B.

86 Domaines Barons de Rothschild (Lafite) 2008 Blason d'Aussières (Corbières); \$20. Berry and bramble mingle with touches of cocoa and tree bark on the nose. The palate shows more bright fruit flavors supported by garrigue herbs and peppery spice. Forward and approachable but tasty and easy to drink. Imported by Pasternak Wine Imports.—L.B.

86 Les Deux Rives 2008 Rouge (Corbières); \$14. The herbal notes of fennel seed and licorice almost dominate the bouquet, but lifting aromas of black berry, currant and plum skin fight to flesh things out. The satin-textured mouth with dusty tannins shows stronger and riper fruit flavors of raspberry sauce and fresh fig. Drink now. Imported by Pasternak Wine Imports.—L.B.

MINERVOIS

89 Domaine Sainte Léocadie 2008 Leukadios (Minervois); \$18. Soft barnyard mingles with dried thyme and lavender, adding complexity to the juicy plum, cherry and wild raspberry flavors. Creamy but firm, with gripping tannins and a cocoa-dusted finish. With 50% Syrah, 40% Grenache and 10% Carignan, this is an intense Minervois that can stand up to beef stew or braised short ribs. Imported by Bob Bofman Selections.—L.B.

89 Gérard Bertrand 2008 Syrah-Carignan (Minervois); \$18. The nose is loaded with garrigue aromas, mostly rosemary and dried bay leaf, lifted by vibrant black cherry and black berry jam. Licorice and spice unfold in the chewy mouth, with a decadent milk chocolate infused finish. Imported by Gerard Bertrand USA.—L.B.

88 Foncalieu 2008 Le Lien (Minervois); \$25. This 100% Syrah is thick and intense with strong black fruit flavors lifted by accents of anise and milk chocolate. The mouth is full of ripe plum and cherry flavors, with well-integrated tannins and a solid, juicy finish. Imported by Scoperta Importing Co. Inc.—L.B.

87 Loup Blanc 2008 Le Régal du Loup (Minervois); \$20. This is a food-friendly wine with great balance but not an overly

assertive character. Small black currant, black berry and cherry notes are augmented by hints of soft dried herbs, vanilla bean and minerality. The mouth is medium weight with soft tannins that carry through to the rich boysenberry-flavored finish. Imported by Jenny and François Selections.—L.B.

87 Mas des Mas 2008 Minervois; \$17. Medium-intense aromas of black cherry and berry appear first, followed by lovely accents of orange blossom florals and sweet licorice spice. A touch of leather unfolds on the finish. Medium weight and balanced with approachable tannins and an easy-drinking structure. Imported by Grape Expectations (CA).—L.B.

84 Chateau du Donjon 2008 Grande Tradition (Minervois); \$17. Dusty red cherry and plum skins abound on this easy-drinking red. Accents of black pepper and dried carnation petals add interest to the palate. Light weight and very soft in the mouth; drink now. Imported by Hand Picked Selections.—L.B.

CABARDES

90 O'Vineyards 2006 Proprietor's Reserve (Cabardes); \$24. Loads of menthol and pepper spice fill the nose, with a supporting fruit core of black cherry, black currant and wild raspberry. The texture is like crushed satin but the tannins, though fine grain, have good staying power. Mocha and cherry pits add character to the close. Imported by RJL O'Connell Distribution.—L.B.

89 O'Vineyards 2007 Proprietor's Reserve (Cabardes); \$24. Attractive and enticing, with aromas of dried red fruit and raspberry dust spiced up with notes of pepper, cocoa and toffee. Although grippy and somewhat sandpapery in the mouth, that firm texture lingers through the endless finish. Still young; try in 2012. Imported by RJL O'Connell Distribution.—L.B.

88 O'Vineyards 2006 Les Américains (Cabardes); \$15. The nose is gorgeous; the black plum and cherry fruit mingle seamlessly with licorice root, crushed violet and cocoa nib aromas. The tannins are so firm and assertive it almost kills your palate, with the fruit squeezing out on the end only after the astringency subsides. It shows promise, but needs a lit-

tle more time to come together and smooth out. Imported by RJL O'Connell Distribution.—L.B.

88 O'Vineyards 2007 Les Américains (Cabardes); \$15. A big and bold blend of Syrah, Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon, this brooding wine shows loads of black currant, plum, tobacco and menthol herbliness on the nose and mouth. Anise and used coffee grinds develop on the close, which stays alongside the gripping tannins. Try after 2012. Imported by RJL O'Connell Distribution.—L.B.

OTHER RED WINES

90 Domaines Paul Mas 2008 Château Paul Mas Clos des Mûres (Coteaux du Languedoc); \$20. Composed of 85% Syrah, 10% Grenache and 5% Mourvèdre and aged in almost exclusively new oak for eight months, this is an opulent wine loaded with dark cherry and raspberry, mocha and garrigue spice throughout. It's full and lush but balanced and well integrated. Drinks beautifully now but should hold for another couple of years. Imported by Palm Bay International.—L.B.

87 O'Vineyards 2007 Trah Lah Lah Merlot-Cabernet Sauvignon (Vin de Pays Cité de Carcassonne); \$13. Intense aromas of cassis, black plum, licorice and espresso grinds fill the bouquet of this 65% Merlot, 35% Cabernet Sauvignon blend. Firm and tight in the mouth with prominent tannins and assertive dark fruit flavors. A touch of soft spice unfolds on the end. Imported by RJL O'Connell Distribution.—L.B.

85 Mas Gabinèle 2008 Vieilles Vignes Cinsault (Vin de Pays de L'Herault); \$15. Fresh and vibrant aromas of red berries and soft herbs fill the bouquet, while the palate offers more kirsch and sweet spice flavors. Light and juicy in the mouth with a clean but satisfying finish. Imported by Bourgeois Family Selections.—L.B.

SAINT-CHINIAN

88 Foncalieu 2008 Apogée (Saint-Chinian); \$25. This 95% Syrah wine (with 5% Grenache) is thick and hearty with a strong black fruit core augmented by nuances of flinty minerality, dark chocolate, tobacco and

BUYING GUIDE

leather. Chewy and firm in the mouth with assertive tannins that linger through the finish. It could use some time to integrate and mellow; try after 2012. Imported by Scoperta Importing Co. Inc. —L.B.

86 Château Comte Devaugelas 2007 Saint-Chinian; \$9. Dried raspberry, cherry and cocoa powder notes dominate with secondary accents of thyme, bay leaves and animal notes. Lively and easy to drink. A tasty and approachable value selection that would pair perfectly with lamb loin or chops. Imported by Tri-Vin Imports. **Best Buy.** —L.B.

86 Château Saint Baulery 2009 Saint-Chinian; \$14. A juicy and fruit-forward choice with assertive aromas of strawberry, blueberry and red plum flesh. Ready for consumption now with a soft structure and gentle tannins. Imported by Hand Picked Selections. —L.B.

85 Mas des Mas 2008 Saint-Chinian; \$17. Earthy and a touch wild with scents of animal barnyard, forest floor and small red berries. Medium weight with an approachable structure followed by a short finish. Drink now. Imported by Winesellers Ltd.—L.B.

LANGUEDOC-ROUSSILLON WHITE WINES

CHARDONNAY

90 Gérard Bertrand 2009 Aigle Royal Chardonnay (Limoux); \$75. Soft butter and vanilla-almond milk mingle with pear and Gala apple aromas and flavors. Accents of thyme and orange blossom add complexity to the bouquet, while woody sweet spice appears in the mouth and sticks around through the long close. Full, creamy and decadent. Only 5,200 bottles produced. Imported by Gerard Bertrand USA. —L.B.

88 Robert Skalli 2008 Sud de France Réserve Chardonnay (Vin de Pays d'Oc); \$15. Baked red apple, soft peach and a touch of whole vanilla bean fill the bouquet, while notes of clementine rind and soft wood develop in the mouth. Round but not fat with

medium acid and a solid finish. Drink now. Imported by Skalli Family Wines. —L.B.

86 Louis Changarnier 2008 Chardonnay (Vin de Pays d'Oc); \$13. Pear, red apple skins and lavender aromas start off this attractive Chard, while sweet lemon custard and fresh apple slices round out the palate. Medium weight, clean and balanced. Imported by Scoperta Importing Co. Inc. —L.B.

SAUVIGNON BLANC

86 François Lurton 2008 Les Fumees Blanches Sauvignon Blanc (Vin de Pays du Comté Tolosan); \$9. A great value white with 8,000 cases imported, so it should be relatively easy to find. Tart gooseberry and lemon flavors integrate with hints of fresh herbs, green hay and soft smoke. Medium weight but lively with gently prickly acidity that lingers through the finish. Imported by Ex-Cellars Wine Agencies, Inc. **Best Buy.** —L.B.

85 Domaine de Coussergues NV Sauvignon Blanc (Vin de Pays d'Oc); \$12. An easy-drinking selection with a mouthwatering finish and a softly prickly mouthfeel. Vibrant fruit flavors of hard mango slices, firm nectarine and pineapple acidity. Enjoy now while it's fresh and young. Imported by Kysela Père et Fils. —L.B.

85 Le Dog 2009 d'Anaïs Sauvignon Blanc (Vin de Pays d'Oc); \$11. White peach, sweet citrus, underripe nectarine and delicate dried savory herbs flesh out this racy, light bodied white. Pair with grilled seafood or salad with a lemon vinaigrette. Imported by World Premiere Wines LLC. —L.B.

85 Les Javelles 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Pays d'Oc); \$11. Soft and easy to drink, with notes of green plum, lime citrus and fresh green grass throughout. Round but structured with medium acidity and a crisp, clean finish. Drink now. Imported by Cellar Door Selections. —L.B.

83 Les Vignerons de la Méditerranée 2009 Réserve St. Martin Sauvignon Blanc (Vin de Pays d'Oc); \$10. Delicate aromas of fresh hay, bay leaf and orange rind unfold in the bouquet, while the mouth offers more green plum and tart citrus pith flavors.

Light weight with a short but clean finish. Imported by Pasternak Wine Imports. —L.B.

OTHER WHITE WINE

90 Château Rives-Blanques 2008 Dédicace Chenin Blanc (Limoux); \$20. This 100% Chenin Blanc is a beautiful example of what the variety can express: soft florals loaded with garrigue notes alongside tropical fruit aromas of mango, guava and pineapple. It's vibrant in the mouth, with moderate acidity and a lifting backbone of lemon verbena. The finish lingers gracefully, and overall the wine is ripe and attractive without being sweet or cloying. Imported by Demontoux Fine Wines. **Editors' Choice.** —L.B.

GERMANY

RIESLING KABINETT

92 Joh. Jos. Prüm 2008 Graacher Himmelreich Riesling Kabinett (Mosel); \$NA. A Riesling with an enticing nose of honeysuckle and other summer blossoms, stone fruit and focused stony minerality. There's a wonderfully taut palate, fantastically racy and refreshing, with layers of persistent flavor intensity. The minerality stays with you all the way to a very long lingering finish. Imported by Valckenberg International, Inc.

91 Dr. H. Thanisch (Erben Müller-Burggraef) 2008 Bernkasteler Doctor Riesling Kabinett (Mosel); \$44. Inviting layered aromas of ripe stone fruit, hints of citrus and some earthy spice and minerality. Crisp and refreshing. Very good depth and intensity of lively youthful fruit with a strong mineral core adding complexity. Medium sweet and balanced with a long finish. Imported by Winesellers Ltd.

91 Dr. Pauly Bergweiler 2009 Bernkasteler Badstube Riesling Kabinett (Mosel); \$21. This is awfully creamy and lush for a kabinett, but yummy at the same time. Some hints of lees and funk add complexity to the sweet green apple, passion fruit and lime flavors. Finishes long, with lingering notes of crushed stone, citrus and honey. Imported by Winesellers Ltd. **Editors' Choice.** —J.C.

90 Dr. Loosen 2009 Blue Slate Riesling Kabinett (Mosel); \$20. As with all of the Dr. Loosen wines, this blended kabinett is very fruit-forward and direct. The green apple and lime notes are wonderfully pure and balanced. Drink this light, spritely wine over the next few years. Imported by Loosen Bros. USA. *Editors' Choice.* —J.C.

90 Markus Molitor 2008 Haus Klosterberg Riesling Kabinett (Mosel); \$18. Classic Mosel nose of fresh blossoms, delicate stone fruit, slate and hints of flint. This is medium sweet, crisp and lively with lots of juicy fruit flavors, notes of acacia honey, white peach and citrus. Nicely taut and focused palate, very minerally with refreshing long finish. Imported by Weingut Markus Molitor.

89 Dr. Loosen 2009 Erdener Treppchen Riesling Kabinett (Mosel); \$26. Shows wonderful purity of fruit—green apple and lime, perhaps a touch of flower shop greens—and impeccable balance, being light in body, off dry, crisp and refreshing. Delicious. Imported by Loosen Bros. USA. —J.C.

89 Dr. Loosen 2008 Blue Slate Riesling Kabinett (Mosel); \$20. Quite ripe and precise stone fruit aromas with interesting hints of minerality. Refreshingly crisp with balanced sweetness. Ample youthful, juicy fruits dance across the palate. Moderate intensity of flavor, zesty texture and a moderately long finish. Imported by Loosen Bros. USA.

89 Dr. Wagner 2008 Ockfener Bockstein Riesling Kabinett (Mosel); \$23. The subtle nose features a medley of citrus fruits. Zesty lemon, grapefruit and tangerine flavors persist across the palate. Juicy and refreshing with an attractive midpalate creaminess adding weight and complexity. Smooth and long, with a nice mineral kick on the finish.

89 Karl Erbes 2008 Ürziger Würzgarten Riesling Kabinett (Mosel); \$19. This boasts a pretty nose of peach, honeysuckle blossom, tangerine and cantaloupe and stony minerality. Lively, juicy texture with a medley of zesty citrus fruit, and fresh stone-fruit flavors. Hints of honey and blossoms and a lingering minerality linger on the finish.

88 Caspari-Kappel 2008 Enkircher Batterieberg Riesling Kabinett

(Mosel); \$23. Ripe nose of peach, apricot and honey with some petrol. This is sweet yet refreshing, with moderately concentrated ripe flavors. Smooth texture across the palate, attractive mineral notes and some spice on the finish. Imported by Magellan Wine Imports.

88 Joh. Haart 2008 Piesporter Goldtröpfchen Riesling Kabinett (Mosel-Saar-Ruwer); \$23. Medium-gold in color, with a pronounced nose of ripe yellow peach and nectarine and hints of spice and minerality. Crisp, with juicy, sweet, ultraripe yellow fruit flavors following on the palate, but quite loose-knit texture. Simple easy-drinking.

88 Markus Molitor 2008 Wehlener Sonnenuhr Riesling Kabinett (Mosel); \$20. Starts off with an almost indescribable note of petrichor, then develops more apple, citrus and even a hint of peachy ripeness. It's plump and medium in body, with lovely balance to the off-dry finish. Imported by Weingut Markus Molitor. —J.C.

87 Joh. Jos. Prüm 2008 Wehlener Sonnenuhr Riesling Kabinett (Mosel); \$NA. Pale lemon in color. Restrained at first and quite reduced, but opens up in the glass to show appealing citrus and white peach aromas. Crisp and juicy, with citrus flavors predominating—tangerine, ruby red grapefruit and meyer lemon. Medium sweet, refreshing but slightly short on the finish. Imported by Valckenberg International, Inc.

86 Dr. Zenzen 2008 Apollo-Falter Valwiger Rosenhang Riesling Kabinett (Mosel); \$20. Offers plenty of citrus, spanning the spectrum from lime to orange and tangerine, with just a hint of nectarine mixed in. At 8.5% alcohol, this kabinett gives an impression close to dryness, and despite despite relatively soft acids on the finish, it's nicely balanced. Imported by Zenzen Wines USA. —J.C.

84 Max Wagner 2008 Castle Hill Trarbacher Schlossberg Riesling Kabinett (Mosel); \$24. Pale lemon color. There's a slightly resinous nose with strong earthy overtones and hints of citrus. Racy, almost tart and a bit jagged across the palate. Moderate flavor intensity of lemon and grapefruit sherbet. Lacks some flesh, and finishes a touch short. Imported by Maxhof Imports.

RIESLING SPÄTLESE

93 Markus Molitor 2008 Haus Klosterberg Riesling Spätlese (Mosel); \$23. Enticingly complex nose, multifaceted, with a medley of blossoms, honey, spice, white peaches and ample minerality showing through. Sweet, with delicious racy acidity and a lively taut texture. This is very focused, with generous flavors of elderberries, stone fruit, orange citrus, spice and slate. Long, persistent finish. Imported by Weingut Markus Molitor.

91 Dr. H. Thanisch (Erben Müller-Burggraef) 2008 Berncasteler Doctor Riesling Spätlese (Mosel); \$62. Fairly broad aromas show some evolution with honey notes adding intrigue to ripe stone fruit and floral notes. Medium-sweet, but balanced and taut, with a juicy, crisp texture and lots of minerality on the palate. Persistent layers of flavors with honey, apricot, peach, spice showing nicely. Long mineral finish. Imported by Winesellers Ltd.

91 Dr. Loosen 2008 Wehlener Sonnenuhr Riesling Spätlese (Mosel); \$30. Nicely layered, with inviting fusel notes, ripe yellow fruit and honey aromas. Very mineral. Deliciously crisp, juicy and focused with a nicely taut palate. Lovely rich texture, racy and balanced. Medium sweet, with ample flavor depth—stone fruit, hints of guava, citrus and persistent minerality on a long finish. Imported by Loosen Bros. USA.

91 Dr. Loosen 2008 Ürziger Würzgarten Riesling Spätlese (Mosel); \$30. Pale gold in color. The attractive nose features ripe yellow stone fruit with strong mineral overtones, while the palate reveals enough crisp, refreshing acidity to balance the sweetness. There's a smooth, rich texture, showing ample flavors of ripe stone fruit, floral notes and honey. Concentrated, with a moderately long, fresh finish. Imported by Loosen Bros. USA.

90 Gustav Adolph Schmitt 2008 Niersteiner Auflangen Riesling Spätlese (Rheinhessen); \$12. Inviting nose of intense mellow, yellow fruit with notably focused minerality, some spice and a hint of flowers. Off dry and beautifully balanced by the crisp acidity and generous flavors of delicious, juicy fruit, this is richly textured, yet taut and elegant.

BUYING GUIDE

Long, persistent, layered finish. Imported by Scoperta Importing Co. Inc.

90 Joh. Jos. Prüm 2008 Wehlener Sonnenuhr Riesling Spätlese (Mosel); \$NA. Delicate lemony color. Fragrant nose of peach and apricot crème pastry, with hints of sherbet and grapefruit and a stony mineral focus. Crisp, racy with a youthful fruit cocktail medley of flavors. Light-bodied but focused and taut. Not hugely concentrated, but well balanced and persistent. Imported by Valckenberg International, Inc.

90 Wittmann 2007 Westhofener Morstein Riesling Spätlese (Rheinhessen); \$38. Medium-gold color with pronounced aromas of ripe yellow fruits and honey, and hints of warm earth, savory root vegetables and spice. Sweet and richly textured, but refreshingly crisp. Vibrant flavors follow through on the palate showing strong mineral notes. Broad but firm palate and a long lingering lively finish. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd.

89 Clusserath-Weiler 2008 Trittenheimer Apotheke Riesling Spätlese (Mosel); \$31. The restrained nose shows some white peach notes, lees and stony minerality. This is complex, layered and persistent across the palate, opening up to ample stone fruit flavors, earthy notes, dried herbs and spice. Crisp, with sweetness, moderately concentrated flavors and a rich texture all in balance, if a little loose knit on the finish. Imported by Magellan Wine Imports.

89 Joh. Haart 2008 Piesporter Goldtröpfchen Riesling Spätlese (Mosel-Saar-Ruwer); \$20. Pale gold color wine, with attractive floral nose hints, honey, slate and some obvious sulfur. Racy with a crisp juicy texture, lemony and moderately taut. Sweet with ample citrus and white peach flavors on the palate. Evident minerality on the finish adds complexity. Reasonably long length.

89 Markus Molitor 2007 Bernkasteler Badstube Riesling Spätlese (Mosel); \$29. Pale gold color. Broad and aromatic, showing ripe yellow peach and nectarine, hints of honey, dried herbs and an earthy minerality. Fuller body and weightier on the palate than expected. Slightly loose knit but shows ample ripe stone-fruit flavors that balance sweet-

ness and acidity slightly awkwardly on the palate. Imported by Weingut Markus Molitor.

88 Josef Rosch 2008 Trittenheimer Apotheke Riesling Spätlese (Mosel); \$32. Light nose, not showing much intensity on this pale gold Riesling. Slightly resinous, showing more on the palate with ripe stone-fruit flavors, hints of melon and pineapple. Quite sweet and rich, with slightly syrupy texture. Pleasing but straightforward and simple. Imported by Magellan Wine Imports.

88 Pamona Cellars 2007 Riesling Spätlese (Mosel); \$10. Broad aromas of ripe yellow fruit and a hint of flint on the palate. Sweet and moderately rich in texture, but slightly loose knit and simple, with attractively ripe and juicy stone-fruit flavors and a touch of minerality shining through on the finish. Imported by Scoperta Importing Co. Inc.

87 Bollig-Lehnert 2009 Piesporter Goldtröpfchen Riesling Spätlese (Mosel); \$22. This sweet spätlese displays some rather funky, sweaty aromas, but also ample apple and citrus fruit, and the resulting combination is both likable and complex. The crisp, green-apple finish fades a bit quickly, but this is a pleasant warm-weather sipper. Imported by Winesellers Ltd. —J.C.

85 Johann Falkenburg 2009 Late Harvest Riesling Spätlese (Mosel); \$10. A soft, easy style that should have broad appeal, this modest spätlese marries slightly confectioned, ripe fruit flavors with more balanced citrusy notes. Drink now. Imported by Prestige Wine Group. **Best Buy.** —J.C.

85 Moselland 2009 Riesling Spätlese (Mosel); \$18. This spätlese from the huge Moselland cooperative does a decent job at balancing hints of softly ripe peaches with taut grapefruity elements, all reinforced by a rather sinewy palate feel. Drink now. Imported by Halby Marketing. —J.C.

84 Flying Ace 2009 Riesling Spätlese (Mosel); \$11. Smells of baby powder, green apple and lime make for a promising start, but this wine turns sweet and a bit flabby on the palate, as the bubble gum and cotton candy flavors are only partially balanced by modest acidity. Imported by Magellan Wine Imports. —J.C.

84 Rothburg 2009 Riesling Spätlese (Mosel); \$11. A medium-bodied, slightly chunky Riesling, this lacks the elegance and finesse of the best Mosel wines, but still manages a tasty balance of sweet and tart, with apple, citrus and earthy notes all combining on the palate. Imported by Tri-Vin Imports. —J.C.

RIESLING AUSLESE

93 Schloss Johannisberger 2007 Rosalack Riesling Auslese (Rheingau); \$NA/375 ml. This succulent, almost tender, wine starts off with lovely aromas of honey and bergamot, adding hints of apricot and vanilla in the mouth. It's a soft, lush style, rather sweet, with a long, mouthwatering finish. It may not be as long-lived as some 2007s, but it should remain delectable for another 10 years or so. Imported by Valckenberg International, Inc.—J.C.

93 Schloss Saarstein 2008 Serrig Schloss Saarsteiner Riesling Auslese (Mosel-Saar-Ruwer); \$56/375 ml. Schloss Saarstein's auslese is remarkably consistent year to year, testament to the greatness of the site and the quality of the farming and wine-making. The 2008 features cool, slate-driven scents softened just slightly by hints of superripe apples and ripe apricot. This medium-bodied wine is clean and tightly focused, with the sweetness admirably balanced by crisp acids. Should age 15 years or more. Imported by Valckenberg International, Inc. —J.C.

92 Dr. Loosen 2008 Ürziger Würzgarten Riesling Auslese (Mosel); \$42. Mid gold in color, this wine displays unctuous aromas of honey, ripe apricot, wildflowers and slate. Sweet, but has a lovely raciness on the palate. The plump peach and apricot flavors are layered with hints of anise, slate and honey that come across as very pure and elegant. Taut, focused palate and a long, juicy mineral finish. Imported by Loosen Bros. USA.

92 Dr. Loosen 2008 Erdener Prälat Riesling Auslese (Mosel); \$42/375 ml. This auslese is less obviously fruity than many of Loosen's recent efforts, with a smoky, fuel-oil overlay to the honeyed and stone-like flavors. At only 7.5% alcohol, it's sweet yet not heavy, balanced by bright acidity and a hint of prickly CO₂ still in evidence. Drink it over the

next 15–20 years. Imported by Loosen Bros. USA. —J.C.

92 Geh. Rat Dr. von Bassermann-Jordan 2008 Forster Jesuitengarten Riesling Auslese (Pfalz); \$74/375 ml. A lush, sweet auslese, the 2008 Jesuitengarten from von Bassermann-Jordan is unctuous in texture and laden with tropical fruit, with just enough citrus for balance. It finishes long and sweet, but clean, inviting one back for another sip. Drink now–2025, possibly longer. Imported by Valckenberg International, Inc. —J.C.

92 Maximin Grünhäuser 2009 Abtberg 149 Riesling Auslese (Mosel); \$58. This wonderful auslese offers volume and richness without weight—it's a sort of fluffy custard in texture, loaded with funky, leesy notes on the nose but also with passion fruit, green apple and pineapple notes on the palate. Yes, it's sweet, but the acids provide beautiful balance on the finish. Drink now–2025. Imported by Valckenberg International, Inc. **Cellar Selection.** —J.C.

91 Dr. Loosen 2008 Wehlener Sonnenuhr Riesling Auslese (Mosel); \$42. A pale, lemon color Riesling. The complex nose of honey, delicate stone fruit, elder-flower and stony minerality is deliciously inviting, while intense, focused ripe fruit prevails all across the palate. This is sweet, yet crisp and oozing freshness, with a taut, lively texture. Very long, complex and subtle at the same time. Imported by Loosen Bros. USA.

91 Joh. Jos. Prüm 2008 Graacher Himmelreich Riesling Auslese (Mosel); \$NA. A delicate nose of complex aromas with striking stony minerality goes alongside aromas of honeysuckle, white lilac, elder flower and white peach. Very taut yet filigreed on the palate, this pale, lemon-colored wine is sweet, yet crisp and poised. Ample juicy ripe fruit flavors persist across the palate and lead to a long and layered, refreshing finish. Imported by Valckenberg International, Inc.

91 Wittmann 2007 Westhofener Morstein Riesling Auslese (Rheinhessen); \$58/500 ml. Complex, intense nose of fresh honeysuckle, tangerines, marmalade, spice, dried apricots, golden raisins and an earthy minerality abound. Delightfully rich and sweet, but lively and fresh, with nicely balanced racy acidity. Generous concentration of flavor that

coats the whole palate and lingers to a sweet but vibrantly juicy finish. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd.

90 Bollig-Lehnert 2008 Dhroner Hofberger Riesling Auslese * (Mosel); \$24.** Lemon in color, with pronounced floral aromas—elder-flower, honeysuckle and acacia—alongside white peaches and nectarines. There's a strong mineral focus on the nose. Sweet, yet deliciously crisp and juicy, with ample flavor concentration. Taut and lively, and has a long mineral finish. Imported by Winesellers Ltd.

90 Dr. H. Thanisch (Erben Thanisch) 2008 Bernkasteler Doctor Riesling Auslese (Mosel); \$NA. Mid-gold in color, this has quite a broad bouquet—ripe stone fruit, honey, white flowers and a strong stony mineral focus. Sweet, smooth and rich in texture, yet crisp, refreshing and brimming with lively flavors. Very long and persistent, with complex layers of flavor that linger on the finish. Imported by Valckenberg International, Inc.

90 Joh. Jos. Prüm 2008 Wehlener Sonnenuhr Riesling Auslese (Mosel); \$NA. Pale lemony color. Some initial reductive notes blow off to reveal a classic Mosel nose of delicate flowers, white stone fruit and slate. Crisp, elegant, juicy and packed with mouthwatering stone fruit and citrus flavors. Very mineral, taut and focused, with tremendous length and a persistent, juicy finish. Imported by Valckenberg International, Inc.

90 Maximin Grünhäuser 2009 Bruderberg Jungfernwien Riesling Auslese (Mosel); \$82. From young vines, this is a sweet, slightly simple, but nicely balanced wine, displaying plenty of ripe apple and citrus flavors. The lingering, honeyed sweetness is balanced on the finish by just a trace of astringency. Drink now–2020. Imported by Valckenberg International, Inc. —J.C.

89 Dr. Pauly Bergweiler 2009 Wehlener Sonnenuhr Riesling Auslese (Mosel); \$40. Sweet, verging on honeyed, this lush wine features plenty of superripe apples balanced by just a dash of citrus and a hint of bitterness on the finish. Could use more complexity. Imported by Winesellers Ltd. —J.C.

89 Gräflich von Hohenthal'Scher 2007 Graacher Himmelreich Ries-

ling Auslese (Mosel); \$19. Notes of honey and cinnamon combine with a slightly musky spice note to give this sweet auslese added interest. It's round in the mouth without being soft or flabby in the slightest, with lingering notes of baked apple on the finish. Imported by Scoperta Importing Co. Inc. —J.C.

89 Max Wagner 2006 Trarbacher Schlossberg Riesling Auslese (Mosel); \$29/375 ml. On the drier side for an auslese, with the alcohol reaching 10%, this wine features hints of apricot and pineapple marmalade, but there are also less pristine earthy, fungal notes that some may read as complex while others may find them slightly dirty. Crisp and linear on the finish. Drink now–2015. Imported by Maxhof Imports. —J.C.

86 Markus Molitor 2008 Zeltinger Sonnenuhr Riesling Auslese (Mosel); \$66. Sweet, rich and soft, this is a nice wine, but in the context of site, producer and vintage, a bit of a disappointment. Honey and clove flavors lack extra dimensions of complexity and focus, finishing without the expected balancing zing of acidity. Imported by Weingut Markus Molitor. —J.C.

RIESLING BA

96 St. Urbans-Hof 2008 Leiwener Laurentiuslay Riesling Beerenauslese (Mosel-Saar-Ruwer); \$175/375 ml. From a vintage not known for its supersweet selections, this wine is a revelation. Honey and bergamot notes mingle easily on the nose, while the palate unfolds to reveal layers of honey, dried apricots and orange marmalade. It's rich, viscous and concentrated without any heaviness, with a finish that's sweet and lingering. This should age through 2040 easily. Imported by HB Wine Merchants. **Cellar Selection.** —J.C.

95 Geh. Rat Dr. von Bassermann-Jordan 2008 Forster Kirchenstück Riesling Beerenauslese (Pfalz); \$239/375 ml. Hugely sweet and decadent, this is a tour de force of botrytized winemaking. Honeyed citrus aromas are buoyed by hints of perfume and spice, with dried apricot flavors accented by spiced honey. Mouthcoating, rich and impossibly long, this wine should easily age for 40 or more years. Imported by Valckenberg International, Inc. **Cellar Selection.** —J.C.

BUYING GUIDE

92 Schloss Johannisberger 2008 Rosa-Goldlack Riesling Beerenauslese (Rheingau); \$NA/375 ml. A departure from the last couple of vintages, with a unique scent of chestnuts adding interest to the sweet, concentrated notes of honey and orange marmalade. It's an odd, different accent, yet the balance of sweetness and bracing acidity is spot on. Imported by Valckenberg International, Inc. —J.C.

91 Schloss Johannisberger 2007 Rosa-Goldlack Riesling Beerenauslese (Rheingau); \$NA/375 ml. Moderately sweet and viscous, without the intense concentration seen in some of the vintage's BAs, this remains a skilfully balanced wine, with candied pineapple, citrus and honey balanced by fresh acidity. Drink it over the next 25 years or so. Imported by Valckenberg International, Inc.—J.C.

90 Max Wagner 2006 Trabener Würzgarten Riesling Beerenauslese (Mosel); \$49/375 ml. This wine boasts a lovely nose redolent of dried apricots and bergamot, with fresh, mossy hints on the background. On the palate, it's medium bodied, not overly sweet or concentrated but with clean melon and citrus flavors that finish clean and fresh. Imported by Maxhof Imports.—J.C.

RIESLING TBA

97 Geh. Rat Dr. von Bassermann-Jordan 2008 Deidesheimer Hohenmorgen Riesling Trockenbeerenauslese (Pfalz); \$245/375 ml. Exceeds even this producer's stunning beerenauslese, featuring an even more intoxicating perfume of honey, dried apricots and candied pineapple, with slightly more acidity to provide balance to the extra level of sweetness, so much so that this wine comes across as refreshing on the finish, despite the incredibly high levels of sugar. Drink now–2050, possibly longer. Imported by Valckenberg International, Inc. *Cellar Selection.* —J.C.

RIESLING EISWEIN

93 Dr. Pauly Bergweiler 2008 Bernkasteler Johannisbrünnchen Riesling Eiswein(Mosel); \$95/375 ml. Realistically priced for genuine German eiswein, this is also rather alcoholic for most, weighing in

at 10% abv. So it may not be as sweet as expected, but it still shows razor-like focus, with the residual sweetness balanced by bright pink grapefruit and pineapple notes. Imported by Winesellers Ltd. —J.C.

93 Maximin Grünhäuser 2008 Herenberg Riesling Eiswein (Mosel-Saar-Ruwer); \$50/375 ml. Shows lovely balance between intense sweetness and crisp acidity, so that the wine's honeyed citrus notes really sing. Hints of marmalade, clove and a perfumed, slightly minty note all add complexity. Delicious now, and probably for a good many years to come. Imported by Valckenberg International, Inc. —J.C.

86 Schloss Johannisberger 2008 Ex Bibliotheca Subterranea Riesling Eiswein (Rheingau); \$NA/375 ml. An odd bird, this wine is almost pungent, with intense, earthy aromas that carry a nutty edge. It's hugely thick and viscous (and sweet), but the candied orange flavors lack a bit of balancing acidity. Imported by Valckenberg International, Inc.—J.C.

OTHER RIESLING

90 Caspari-Kappel 2008 Hochgewächs Süss Riesling (Mosel); \$18. Mid-gold in color, featuring broad, layered aromas of ripe yellow stone fruit, ruby red grapefruit and mineral notes. Concentrated flavors prevail across the palate showing crisp citrus fruits, nectarines, white peaches and hints of honey. Racy acidity balances the sweetness, as does its firm, taut texture, which gives the wine focus. Imported by Magellan Wine Imports.

90 Wittmann 2008 Westhofener Riesling Trocken (Rheinhessen); \$47. Mid-gold in color, with attractive aromas of ripe stone fruits. Focused by earthy minerality, this is dry and crisp, with abundant fruit in the mouth: peach, apricot, orange peel and spice. Nicely balanced, with a long, minerally finish. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd.

89 Egon Müller 2008 Scharzhof Riesling (Mosel-Saar-Ruwer); \$25. Prevailing lemony, citrus-cocktail aromas with hints of almond macaroons. Though medium sweet, it is lip-smackingly crisp and racy, with zesty citrus flavors following through on the palate. Moderately

intense and reasonably taut, if a little austere. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd.

89 Nollen 2008 Notorious Rooster Riesling (Mosel); \$10. Pale lemony color. Classic Mosel nose of stone, slate, white peach and flower blossoms. Vibrant and crisp, balancing the sweetness on the palate and resulting in a wine with a juicy texture and moderate intensity, turning racy on the finish. Not overly complex, but refined. Imported by Admiral Imports. *Best Buy.*

89 Trullo 2008 Riesling (Rheinhessen); \$10. Pale gold color, this has a rather reduced nose at first that slowly gives way to ripe stone fruit aromas and an earthy, savory note. Not very complex, but displays vibrant citrus and stone-fruit flavors that impart a pleasant tingle to the midpalate. Fairly light-bodied and easy drinking, with a moderate fruity finish. Imported by Scoperta Importing Co. Inc. *Best Buy.*

89 Wittmann 2008 Riesling Trocken (Rheinhessen); \$25. Slightly closed at first, but slowly opens to reveal ripe stone fruits, hints of white flowers and an earthy minerality. Dry, with racy acidity that is balanced by lots of lively stone-fruit and citrus flavors. Palate is nicely taut and elegant. Moderately long, juicy finish. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd.

88 Dr. Peter Poontinger 2008 Medium-dry Riesling (Rheinhessen); \$10. Pale gold in color. The savory, earthy nose shows dried herbs and a hint of honey. This is off-dry, but very well balanced by crisp acidity, leaving it refreshing across the palate. Moderately intense juicy citrus, cantaloupe and nectarine flavors. A little loose knit and simple on the finish. Imported by Paulaner HP USA. *Best Buy.*

88 Kühling-Gillot 2009 Qvinterra Riesling Trocken (Rheinhessen); \$16. Not a stereotypical fruity Riesling, the 2009 Qvinterra features plenty of savory, umami-like notes of broth and brine to go along with hints of sun-warmed peaches. It's medium bodied, with a long, velvety-textured finish unusual for a white wine. Intriguing. Imported by Domaine Select Wine Estates. *Editors' Choice.* —J.C.

88 Rheingraf 2009 Bingen Riesling Trocken (Rheinhessen); \$NA. This wine starts off a bit funky and earthy on the nose,

but opens up to reveal more floral and lime-like scents. At 13% alcohol, it's medium bodied and impressively dry tasting, with lime blossom and pineapple fruit balanced by crisp acids. Drink now. Imported by Valckenberg International, Inc. —J.C.

88 Weingut Liebfrauenstift 2009 Kirchenschlüssel Riesling Trocken (Rheinhessen); \$62. Fresh-smelling, like citrus and green herbs or grass, this medium-bodied Riesling is not very fruity, displaying a more sandstone-mineral character on the palate. There's a vaguely umami aspect to it as well, as it ends on a mouthwatering beefy or briny note. Drink now. Imported by Valckenberg International, Inc.—J.C.

87 Sun Garden 2007 Riesling (Mosel); \$11. Mid-gold in color, with a richly honeyed nose, slightly caramel like, showing ultraripe yellow fruits, spice and earthy tuber notes. Earthiness and sweet ripeness follow through on the palate, but it tastes quite fresh. Loose knit, but simple and easy drinking. Finishes slightly short with a resinous kick. Imported by Scoperta Importing Co. Inc. **Best Buy.**

87 Villa Wolf 2009 Dry Riesling (Pfalz); \$12. Part of Dr. Loosen's stable, this is a reasonably dry Riesling at a reasonable price. Petrichor and grapefruit lead the way, with hints of riper citrus fruits helping to round out the midpalate. Ends on notes of anise, crushed stone and citrus. Imported by Loosen Bros. USA. **Best Buy.** —J.C.

87 Weingut Liebfrauenstift 2009 Wormser Liebfrauenstift-Kirchensstück Riesling Trocken (Rheinhessen); \$62. A bit lighter in body and fruitier in style than the very similar 2009 Kirchenschlüssel, this dry Riesling displays crisp apple and citrus flavors alongside deeper, earthier, more savory notes. Imported by Valckenberg International, Inc. —J.C.

87 Weingut Liebfrauenstift 2009 Wormser Riesling Trocken (Rheinhessen); \$42. To judge by its nose, this medium-bodied Riesling is quiet and introverted. And the flavors are also relatively neutral, with a slight earthiness and savory character defining its profile. Has the same lingering beefy-brininess on the finish as the other Liebfrauenstift wines, just not as intense. Imported by Valckenberg International, Inc. —J.C.

85 Blue Fish 2009 Sweet Riesling (Pfalz); \$9. The Blue Fish Rieslings are decent efforts from the Niederkirchen cooperative. The 2009 Sweet Riesling features ripe pear and melon balanced by crisp pineapple notes. It's rather soft and sweet, but since that's what it's supposed to be, it's hard to quibble, especially at the price. Imported by Palm Bay International. **Best Buy.** —J.C.

85 Blue Fish 2009 Original Riesling (Pfalz); \$9. Light in body despite 12.5% alcohol, this lithe, sinewy Riesling is almost dry in style, with zippy pineapple and citrus fruit tracing a lean path down the palate. Drink now. Imported by Palm Bay International. **Best Buy.** —J.C.

85 Bree 2009 Riesling (Pfalz); \$10. This soft yet mouthwatering Riesling is plump and medium bodied, with apple, citrus and melon notes finishing clean and correct. Drink now. Imported by Prestige Wine Group. **Best Buy.** —J.C.

85 Josef Rosch 2009 Leiwener Klostersgarten Riesling Halbtrocken (Mosel); \$17. If this wine's aromas don't exactly burst from the glass, that's OK, because the modest citrus notes are clean and fresh, balancing a bit of sweetness against crisp acids. Drink now. Imported by Magellan Wine Imports. —J.C.

84 Escher Haus 2009 Riesling (Pfalz); \$14. Light almost to the point of inconsequence, this floral, citrusy Riesling is off dry in style, with modest apple and citrus flavors. Drink now. Imported by Winery Exchange. —J.C.

84 Josef Rosch 2008 J.R. Junior Riesling (Mosel); \$24. Uncharacteristically earthy and spicy for a Mosel wine, with flavors of loam accented by musky spice notes. It's off dry in style yet relatively broad on the palate, again setting itself apart from the mainstream. Imported by Magellan Wine Imports. —J.C.

84 Moselland 2008 Riesling (Mosel); \$16. From one of Germany's biggest cooperative wineries, this is a pleasant, if somewhat modestly concentrated Riesling. Apple and citrus flavors don't show a ton of complexity, but they're clean and varietally correct, with the sugar balanced by adequate acids. Drink now. Imported by Halby Marketing. —J.C.

83 Moselland 2008 Zeller Schwarze Katz Riesling (Mosel); \$15. The "black cat" Riesling I remember from my childhood rides again, with modest green apple notes accented by bits of earth and citrus. It's off dry and soft, yet with a slightly sour edge to the finish. Imported by Halby Marketing. —J.C.

GEWÜRZTRAMINER

89 Fitz-Ritter 2008 Gewürztraminer Spätlese (Pfalz); \$22. Mid-gold in color, this has a pronounced classic Gewürztraminer nose of lychee, rose petals, spice and ripe stone fruit with notes of earthy minerality. Sweet and richly textured, round mouthfeel with moderately intense flavors similar to nose with an added note of stem ginger and smoky spice on the finish. Imported by Winesellers Ltd.

89 G&M Machmer 2008 Bechtheimer Stein Gewürztraminer Spätlese (Rheinhessen); \$15. There's an appealing nose of ripe yellow stone fruit, spice and an earthy minerality. Medium-sweet with a lovely rich texture, fleshy, but well balanced by the refreshing acidity. Smooth and broad across the palate, showing strong flavor intensity that lingers. Long, with a persistent layered, mineral finish. Imported by Winesellers Ltd.

89 Villa Wolf 2009 Gewürztraminer (Pfalz); \$12. Pale gold in color, with a fairly pronounced nose of orange citrus rind, dried herbs, pear drops and lime sherbet. Medium sweet and fruity, not terribly complex but nicely juicy and well balanced with an attractive spicy kick on the finish. Youthful, refreshing and easy-drinking. Imported by Loosen Bros. USA. **Best Buy.**

89 Villa Wolf 2008 Gewürztraminer (Pfalz); \$12. Pale to mid-gold in color with a heady nose of exotic spice, rose water and floral blossoms with a hint of smoke. Round and warming on the palate. Sweet yet fresh and juicy with moderate intensity of citrus and stone fruit flavors. Some savory earthy notes on a moderately long finish. Imported by Loosen Bros. USA. **Best Buy.**

88 Weingut Georg Albrecht Schneider 2008 Niersteiner Oelberg Gewürztraminer Spätlese (Rheinhessen); \$17. Ripe aromas of fig, marmalade and honey,

BUYING GUIDE

with hints of resin and balsamic. This is sweet and richly textured, but slightly heavy and low in acid. Moderately high flavor intensity showing similar flavors as on the nose. Fairly long, but shows a touch bitterness on the finish. Imported by Winesellers Ltd.

87 Sun Garden 2007 Gewürztraminer (Pfalz); \$10. Mid-gold in color. Earthy, heady, herbal nose with notes of tangy lime marmalade. Sweet, with a creamy, smooth texture. Tangy citrus flavors follow through with hints of resinous herbs. Pleasant and easy-drinking but with only moderate length and an earthy finish. Imported by Scoperta Importing Co. Inc. **Best Buy.**

86 Starling Castle 2008 Gewürztraminer (Pfalz); \$10. There's a simple nose of tangy orange marmalade on this medium-gold colored wine. Similar flavors follow through on the palate with zingy lime-sherbet notes. Sweet but racy enough to compensate. Still, this is a bit one dimensional and lacking depth of flavor. Pleasant and easy-drinking, with moderate length. Imported by Prestige Wine Group. **Best Buy.**

82 G&M Machmer 2004 Bechtheimer Rosengarten Gewürztraminer Eiswein (Rheinhessen); \$34/375 ml. Sweet and broad, this eiswein displays a distinctly sour edge to its flavors, which proved offputting to this taster. Imported by Winesellers Ltd. —J.C.

OTHER WHITE WINES

91 Fitz-Ritter 2008 Dürkheimer Spielberg Chardonnay Spätlese Trocken (Pfalz); \$24. Medium gold in color. Attractive nose, quite citrusy, orange with floral notes and a touch of honey. Layered and reasonably complex. Dry and richly textured on the palate and medium bodied. Nicely taut and well balanced with ample ripe orchard and melon fruit. Evident minerality right across the palate to the finish, which is persistent, layered and savory. Imported by Winesellers Ltd.

90 Dr. Wehrheim 2008 Muschelkalk Weissburgunder Trocken (Pfalz); \$37. A wine with an inviting nose of ripe fruit, layered with notes of honey and lovely, savory-earthly minerality. This is broad across the palate, with a smooth rich texture. Dry and fresh, featur-

ing ample flavors of ripe orchard and stone fruit, with spice and balsamic notes adding complexity. Long length and a persistent savory finish. Imported by Magellan Wine Imports.

90 Knipser 2008 Chardonnay-Weissburgunder Trocken (Pfalz); \$25. Slight hint of sulfur at first, but it blows off and the nose opens to reveal a rich medley of ripe orchard fruit tinged with dried tarragon and savory spice. Crisp, bright and laden with a patchwork of flavors: ripe apples, pears and stone fruit against a backdrop of earthy minerality. Broad yet only medium bodied, with a moderately long finish. Imported by Magellan Wine Imports.

89 Dr. Wehrheim 2008 Buntsandstein Weisser Burgunder Trocken (Pfalz); \$NA. Earthy on the nose, with savory aromas, fern fronds and ultraripe yellow fruit. This is dry and racy—almost a little tart—showing moderately intense flavors of ripe melons, Golden Delicious apples and Bosc pears. A little skeletal for the crispness but juicy and refreshing, with a long and savory earthy finish. Imported by Magellan Wine Imports.

88 Louis Guntrum 2007 Scheurebe Kabinett (Rheinhessen); \$14. The appealing nose of lemony-lime aromas features a hint of honey. This medium-sweet wine with a gripping crispness is fairly light-bodied and slightly loose-knit, but refreshing, with moderately intense flavors of citrus cocktail. A nice earthy kick chimes in on the finish. Imported by Broadbent Selections, Inc.

87 Dr. Zenzen 2007 Icewine (Rheinhessen); \$28/375 ml. A blend of Weissburgunder and Sylvaner, this accessibly priced Icewine features aromas of honey, caramel and citrus, with flavors of honey, tea and citrus that are sweet and enjoyable without being profound. Overall, it's soft and sweet; fine as an affordable by-the-glass offering. Imported by Zenzen Wines USA. —J.C.

86 Villa Wolf 2009 Pinot Gris (Pfalz); \$NA. Pale gold in color. Slightly sweet and candied aromas prevail: pear drops and white flowers. Similar flavors appear on the fairly light-bodied palate. This is fresh, fruity and easy to drink, but lacking any great depth or flavor intensity. A slight bitter note is noticeable on the finish. Imported by Loosen Bros. USA.

RED WINES

88 Villa Wolf 2009 Pinot Noir (Pfalz); \$NA. Pale ruby color. Predominantly earthy savory aromas with hints of baked red fruit. Medium bodied, slightly chunky and rustic, with grippy tannins, but ample flavors of ripe red fruits and earthy minerality. Fairly long finish. Imported by Loosen Bros. USA.

87 Andreas Bender 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (Pfalz); \$28. Fairly intense aromas of jammy black and red fruit: plums, blackberries and cassis, with notes of coffee and vanilla. On the palate, this is warm, with lots of sweet baking spices and baked black fruit. Fairly simple with a slightly syrupy texture and a warm, spicy finish. Imported by Magellan Wine Imports.

87 Bree 2009 Pinot Noir (Pfalz); \$10. Quite subdued on the nose, with delicate notes of mixed wild berries and a savory earthiness. Light-bodied and refreshing, with soft tannins and moderate intensity of red berries: cranberries, loganberries and wild strawberries. Fairly simple, but an honest, pale ruby-colored wine. Imported by Prestige Wine Group.

86 Andreas Bender 2008 Pinot Noir (Pfalz); \$28. Pale ruby core with slight garnet rim. Moderately intense earthy aromas, leather, dried cherries and a hint of caramel draw you in, while the palate is medium-bodied, with a rustic grip to the tannins. Fairly warm and chunky in texture, with flavors of ripe baked red fruits. Crisp acidity helps keep the balance. Slightly hot on the finish. Imported by Magellan Wine Imports.

85 Knipser 2007 Blauer Spätburgunder Trocken (Pfalz); \$25. Very earthy aromas of root tubers, roast meat and a hint of strawberry gumdrop. This is medium-bodied, with grippy tannins, and comes across as slightly awkward and warm on the palate, with flavors of jammy red fruit. Fairly simple, with a relatively short warm finish. Imported by Magellan Wine Imports.

ROSÉ WINES

88 Heitlinger 2008 Sunset Twilight Rosé (Baden); \$14. An attractive nose of wild strawberries, red currants and cranber-

ries is followed by a dry, nicely round feeling on the palate, with a medley of ripe wild forest fruit and a savory earthy note. This medium-bodied wine displays ample flavor intensity and a smooth, moderately long finish. Imported by USA Wine Imports.

87 Villa Wolf 2009 Pinot Noir Rosé (Pfalz); \$12. Candied nose of sweet red currants, cherries and savory herbs. On the palate, this is quite warm, with mild cherry compote, forest floor and earthy flavors. Simple and a little dilute, but easy drinking, with a pleasantly fruity finish. Imported by Loosen Bros. USA. *Best Buy.*

GREECE RED WINES

AGIORGITIKO

88 Estate Constantin Gofas 2008 Mythic River Agiorgitiko (Nemea); \$12. Cinnamon, spice, leather and forest fruit leads the nose of this balanced, elegant red. Tobacco and spice are wound together with a clean minerality and crisp acid. The wine finishes light but has depth. Versatile and friendly. Imported by Testa Wines of the World. *Best Buy.* —S.K.

88 My Big Fat Greek Wine 2008 Private Label Agiorgitiko (Nemea); \$NA. This intriguing red starts with blackberry, cedar and earthy forest floor aromas, leading into flavors of cola, forest fruit, cedar and spice. Linear, clean and elegant, the wine is food friendly and can age. A stylish choice for myriad palates. Imported by Hellas Import Limited. —S.K.

86 Mediterra 2007 Agiorgitiko (Peloponnese); \$25. The nose starts with violets, vanilla, strawberry and cherry, followed by bright red fruit flavors of strawberry and cherry with an undercurrent of dark chocolate and cracked black pepper. A solid red that will pair well with grilled meats and soft cheeses. Imported by Hellas Import Limited. —S.K.

85 Cambas 2006 Reserve Agiorgitiko (Nemea); \$15. Aromas of fennel, flowers, nuts and red fruit give this wine an interesting start. Clean, dry and spicy with flavors of cherry, black pepper and crushed herb, it ends

with a lingering finish displaying minerality and a touch of cocoa. Imported by Hellas Import Limited. —S.K.

84 Kouros 2006 Agiorgitiko (Nemea); \$12. Bright cherry and red currant aromas are followed by flavors of currant, cedar, spice and black tea in this assertive red. Clean, perky and fresh, it's a fun everyday wine that will pair well with grilled meat dishes, tomato-based pasta dishes and hard cheeses. Imported by Nestor Imports. —S.K.

83 Kourtaki 2005 1.5 L Agiorgitiko (Nemea); \$17. A nose of violets, tobacco, red fruit and spice start this easygoing Agiorgitiko from Greece. Classic red fruit and spice flavors are delivered in a friendly, clean package. Pair with grilled lamb, hamburgers Imported by Nestor Imports. —S.K.

CABERNET SAUVIGNON

88 Haggipavlu 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Peloponnese); \$20. Black fruit, mint and spice lead the nose of this smooth number. On the palate, waves of red berry, plums, violet and wood dominate. A lush wine with style and complexity. Imported by Wonderful Ethnic Imports. —S.K.

85 Oenoforos 2009 Asproolithi Cabernet Sauvignon (Peloponnese); \$15. Cedar, vanilla violets—the nose on the Cabernet is both masculine and soft. On the palate, plum, cherry and violet flavors are delivered in a friendly, fruity package, an approachable red with a spicy finish. Good for grilled meat and stew. Imported by Nestor Imports. —S.K.

84 Cambas 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon (Peloponnese); \$13. The nose on this Cabernet has a sultry character, offering aromas of forest floor, cedar, red berry and mushroom. On the palate, tobacco, leather, cedar and spice give it a masculine edge. Food pairing will take off the smoky edge, as will aging. An intriguing sip. Imported by Hellas Import Limited. —S.K.

XINOMAVRO

88 Chrisohoou 2006 Xinomavro (Naoussa); \$16. A delicate nose of cola, cocoa powder and white pepper leads this

food-friendly red from Greece. Balanced minerality and a delicate fruit character offer a lighter touch than many Greek reds. Cocoa, plum and spice dominate. Pair with grilled lamb, sausages. Imported by Nestor Imports. —S.K.

87 Chrisohoou 2005 Estate Xinomavro (Naoussa); \$22. Sweet cedar, cigarbox and allspice lead the nose on this embraceable Greek red. On the palate, soft tannins, bright red fruit and spice offer a clean, dry character. The finish is smoky and lingering. Not overly complicated but definitely a fine Greek red. Imported by Nestor Imports. —S.K.

83 Pavlou-Kagas 2006 Klima Xinomavro (Macedonia); \$17. Mint, cola and pepper lead on this lighter-style red from Pavlou. The wine offers linear flavors of tea leaves, spice and smoke. Overall, a simple wine with a spicy finish. Imported by Wonderful Ethnic Imports. —S.K.

RED BLENDS

90 Estate Constantin Gofas 2006 Red (Nemea); \$18. This refined red offers aromas of anise, cigarbox and cinnamon, followed by flavors of cocoa, dried berries and spice. Smooth, balanced and sultry, the wine offers a silky texture while at the same time maintaining its firm backbone. Luxurious and unique. Imported by Testa Wines Of The World. *Editors' Choice.* —S.K.

89 Tsantali 2005 Rapsani Reserve (Halkidiki); \$19. The Rapsani Reserve starts with aromas of bitter cocoa, leather and tobacco, leading into savory sips of plum, chocolate, pepper and cinnamon. Intense and assertive, this wine will offer more generous black fruit as it ages. A serious wine that pairs with robust meat dishes. Imported by Fantis Imports, Inc. —S.K.

88 Domaine Gerovassiliou 2005 Avaton Single Estate (Epanomi); \$60. This single-estate red starts with savory warming spice aromas of cinnamon and clove with a touch of red fruit, rolling into flavors of sweet cedar, smoke and plum on the palate. The wine is easy drinking with a soft touch. Approachable and pretty. Imported by Angels' Share Wine Imports, LLC. —S.K.

87 Estate Raptis 2004 Red Rock (Peloponnese); \$28. Sweet cedar, black fruit and vanilla aromas are followed by appealing flavors of cocoa powder, forest fruits and plum on the palate. Though not overly complex, the wine has character and a rich, lingering finish. Imported by Hellas Import Limited. —S.K.

86 A. Parparoussis 2003 Réserve (Nemea); \$50. Anise, plum and cedar on the nose is followed by flavors of red fruit and wood. The finish offers spice and pepper. Slightly stewy but overall a friendly red that will pair well with smoky meat. Imported by Angels' Share Wine Imports, LLC. —S.K.

86 Kourtaki 2008 Vin de Crete Red (Crete); \$17. Juicy raspberry, plum, cherry and vanilla aromas give this red blend a mouthwatering start. On the palate, wooded spice, currants and pepper flavors are clean and spicy. Approachable and versatile. Imported by Nestor Imports. —S.K.

85 Mercuri Estate 2000 Cava (Ilias); \$45. Mint, smoked sausage and pepper lead this slightly rigid red. Tea leaves, tobacco and spice on the palate show this wine can age well, but may be slightly past its prime. Imported by Athenee Importers. —S.K.

OTHER RED WINES

85 Loukatos NV Sweet Red Wine (Mavrodaphne of Patras); \$11. Toasted nut, cedar and cigarbox aromas give this lush dessert wine an earthy feel. On the palate, dried nuts and fruit flavors and a spicy finish entice. Pair with nuts, cheeses, fruit. Imported by Testa Wines Of The World. —S.K.

88 Tsantali 2007 Maronia Vineyard Mavroudi (Thraki); \$20. Black cherry, red currants and vanilla aromas start this grippy, ageable red from Tsantali. On the palate, cedar, mesquite smoke, black pepper and red fruit flavors are both spicy and assertive. Pair with lamb, olive tapenade, smoked meats. Imported by Fantis Imports, Inc. —S.K.

86 Protopapas 2004 Merlot (Pageon); \$17. Pepper, violet, rhubarb and plum aromas give this Merlot assertive character. On the plate, the wine has equal attitude, delivering flavors of dried red fruit, tobacco, cigarbox and

leather. Spicy but balanced by a good minerality, the wine will pair well with salty, hard cheeses and grilled lamb. A fun find. Imported by Testa Wines Of The World. —S.K.

**GREECE
WHITE WINES**

ASSYRTICO

89 Boutari 2009 Assyrtico (Santorini); \$20. Still one of the standards for a clean, crisp Assyrtiko. The Boutari offers citrus and minerals in the nose, and a clean, zippy snap of fresh fruit and sea salt on the palate. Light, elegant and delightful, and fantastic with fresh fish, fruit and salads. Imported by Terlato Wines International. —S.K.

88 San..Torini Winery 2008 Assyrtico (Santorini); \$22. Lemon, cream and spice on the nose are followed by clean, delicate flavors of fresh fruit and spice on the palate. Slightly more feminine and rounded than the average Assyrtiko and thus a bit more approachable to American palates, the wine will pair well with slightly bigger flavors or spicy ethnic cuisine. Imported by Hellas Import Limited. —S.K.

87 Koutsoyiannopoulos 2009 Assyrtico (Santorini); \$19. Racy, fresh but still fruity enough to please a mainstream palate, this Greek white is elegant and easy drinking. Citrus and a touch of sea salt give it an island feel. Pair with grilled octopus, olives. Imported by Athena Importing Co.. —S.K.

CHARDONNAY

88 Estate Biblia Chora 2007 Ktima Chardonnay (Pangeon); \$40. Peach, lemon and orange peel aromas lead this balanced, refined Chardonnay. Vanilla and spice are layered with exotic peach, citrus and pineapple fruit. A white that offers depth but also a mineral finesse. Imported by Angels' Share Wine Imports, LLC. —S.K.

86 Cambas 2008 Chardonnay (Peloponnese); \$13. An appealing nose of vanilla lemon and honey leads this distinctive Chardonnay. On the palate, lemon, toasted nuts, fresh exotic fruit and spice flavors are balanced

and pretty. A great everyday wine with grace. Imported by Hellas Import Limited. —S.K.

86 Domaine Gerovassiliou 2007 Chardonnay (Epanomi); \$60. This wine starts with a touch of spice, orange peel and bright white fruits in the nose, followed by toasted almond, citrus and vanilla on the palate. An elegant, full-bodied white with versatile pairing potential—think lobster, cream-based dishes. Imported by Angels' Share Wine Imports, LLC. —S.K.

84 Hatzi Michalis 2008 Chardonnay (Atalanti Valley); \$17. Lemon, citrus and spice lead on the nose of this easy-drinking Chardonnay. Clean, fresh citrus flavors are intertwined with honey and vanilla accents. The finish is spicy and lingering. Imported by Athenee Importers. —S.K.

83 Harlaftis 2007 Chardonnay (Attica); \$14. Vanilla, orange marmalade and lemon lead this Chardonnay from Greece. Flavors of tasted nuts, vanilla and citrus are bold and rich. Pair with stronger fish dishes or cream-based entrées. Imported by Athenee Importers. —S.K.

MALAGAUZIA

89 Porto Carras 2008 Malagauzia (Halkidiki); \$22. This exotic white starts with aromas of white flowers, lemon and mint, followed by fuller-bodied flavors of peach, apricot and flowers. Balanced with a viscous mouthfeel. The wine is well-suited for robust dishes—think lobster—but also adds depth to simple grilled fish. Imported by Athenee Importers. —S.K.

89 Domaine Gerovassiliou 2007 Malagousia (Epanomi); \$25. Still one of the benchmark Malagousias of Greece, this wine offers aromas of white flowers, peach, lime and lemon peel, followed by delicate waves of mango, citrus and spice. Refreshing and elegant, it pairs well with seafood and poultry as well as spicy Thai cuisine. Imported by Angels' Share Wine Imports, LLC. —S.K.

SAUVIGNON BLANC

89 **Domaine Gerovassiliou 2007 Fumé Sauvignon Blanc (Epanomi); \$40.** This fumé starts with aromas of peach, vanilla and spice, followed by an elegant balance of citrus fruit, toasted vanilla and lemon zest. Fresh but with added body, this SB will pair well with oilier, bolder flavored fish, cheese, cream dishes. Imported by Angels' Share Wine Imports, LLC. —S.K.

87 **Domaine Costa Lazaridi 2009 Amethystos Sauvignon Blanc (Drama); \$22.** Bright citrus fruit and slate comes through on the nose of this fresh Sauvignon Blanc. Elegant, minerally and spun with sea salt, it's lemon and orange character is fun and easy drinking. Pair with clams, oysters, grilled fish. Imported by Nestor Imports. —S.K.

86 **Michalakis 2008 Green Passion Sauvignon (Greece); \$15.** Orange peel, lemon and peach start this uplifting white. Fresh and fun, it offers flavors of bitter lemon, lime and slate. Pair with grilled octopus, goat cheese or fruit. Imported by Hellas Import Limited. —S.K.

OTHER WHITE WINES

89 **Estate Constantin Gofas 2009 Mythic River White (Korinthia); \$15.** Fresh fruit, peach, vanilla and melon leads this likeable blend of Sauvignon Blanc and Roditis. Good, racy freshness and citrus and a touch of slate give the wine a perky character. Delicious with seafood, fresh cheeses and fruit. Imported by Athena Importing Co. —S.K.

88 **Domaine Costa Lazaridi 2009 Amethystos White (Drama); \$19.** This white blend of Sémillon, Sauvignon Blanc and Assyriko starts with a lovely nose of fresh white flowers and citrus, followed by clean, refreshing flavors of citrus and spice on the palate. The wine offers depth but still maintains the balanced acidity and crisp finish that makes Greek wines so great to pair with food. Think grilled fish, olives, capers. Imported by Nestor Imports. —S.K.

87 **Boutari 2009 Moschofilero (Mantinia); \$17.** Floral and alluring with a

bright lemon spin, the aromas of this Moschofilero are both feminine and crisp. On the palate, the wine has lushness, with orange blossom, melon, citrus flavors delivered in creamy wave. Overall, a pretty wine with an elegant flair. Imported by Terlato Wines International. —S.K.

87 **Kouros 2008 Roditis (Patras); \$12.** Soft aromas of vanilla, melon and peach give this wine a pretty, subdued air. Appealing to fans of lighter whites, the wine still has a floral, filled out character that will pair well with spicy ethnic cuisine and sweeter fish dishes. Imported by Nestor Imports. *Best Buy.* —S.K.

87 **Vatistas 2008 Petroulianos (Peloponnese); \$30.** Exotic pineapple and melon fruit aromas lead on this full-bodied white. On the palate, curvy melon and vanilla are punctuated by citrus and a spray of minerals. Assertive with body that can handle bigger flavors, like seafood, poultry and fruit. Imported by Wonderful Ethnic Imports. —S.K.

86 **Cambas 2007 White (Arcadia); \$12.** This alluring blend of Roditis and Moschofilero offers elegant aromas of white flowers and melon, followed by honeyed waves of citrus, flowers and white fruit. Curvy and lush, the wine still finishes clean and easy. A fun white for everyday enjoyment. Imported by Hellas Import Limited. —S.K.

84 **Kourtaki 2008 Moscofilero-Roditis (Peloponnese); \$17/1.5 L.** Exotic fruit and floral aromas start this Moschofilero-Roditis blend. On the palate, lush orange cream, lemon zest, peach and melon unfold. A bigger white with flair. Pair with fruit, salads. Imported by Nestor Imports. —S.K.

CYPRUS

SWEET WINE

89 **Etko 2000 St. Nicholas Xinisteri (Commandaria); \$20.** Alluring aromas of orange peel. Dried apricot, spices and cigarbox lead this historic dessert wine from Cyprus. On the palate, waves of bitter orange, cedar and sweet tobacco unfold. The finish is spicy with a honeyed sweet undertone. Fantastic with nuts. Imported by Wonderful Ethnic Imports. —S.K.

SICILY RED WINES

NERO D'AVOLA

93 **Donnafugata 2006 Mille e Una Notte (Contessa Entellina); \$80.** One of the best wines made on the beautiful island of Sicily, Donnafugata's Mille e Una Notte exhibits gorgeous smoothness in the mouth and exceedingly rich aromas of black currants, chocolate, spice and tobacco. Under all that are notes of toasted almond and pistachio that are characteristic of the Nero d'Avola grape. Imported by Folio Fine Wine Partners. —M.L.

90 **Feudo Maccari 2006 Saia (Sicilia); \$30.** Saia is one of a handful of icon wines from Sicily: It boasts excellent integration of oak and fruit (although the wood presence is definitely felt) and amazing richness and intensity on the finish. The wine is dense, inviting and very long lasting. Imported by Kobrand. —M.L.

90 **Firriato 2007 Harmonium (Sicilia); \$NA.** Harmonium is a very rich and extracted take on Nero d'Avola that will appeal to those who love thick, extracted, warm climate wines. It would pair with succulent steak or barbecue pork ribs and offers loads of oak and red fruit intensity on the finish. Imported by Soilair Selection. —M.L.

89 **Viticoltori Associati Canicatti 2007 Aynat (Sicilia); \$24.** Made with ripe Nero d'Avola grapes, this inky red wine offers density, richness and milky aromas of chocolate, blueberry and creamy berry. There's a touch of bitter spice on the close and the wine tastes chewy and soft. Imported by Sober LLC. —M.L.

88 **Brugnano 2007 Lunario (Sicilia); \$26.** This is a very distinctive expression of Nero d'Avola (the wine is aged in oak barrique) with sweet aromas of cherry cola, Christmas spice, cinnamon and clove. It's soft and silky on the close. Imported by Elite Brands. —M.L.

88 **Caruso & Minini 2007 Cutaja (Sicilia); \$20.** This oak-aged expression offers loads of ripe, jammy fruit followed by root beer, spice, leather and tobacco nuances. The wine is intense, soft, plush and chewy in the

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mouth with rich, succulent tannins. Imported by Vinifera Imports. —M.L.

88 Tenuta di Serramarrocco 2006 Nero di Serramarrocco (Sicilia); \$NA. A distinctive expression of Nero d'Avola with ripe fruit flavors, blackberry preserves, tobacco, spice and leather. There's also a note of dill or wild fennel that speaks highly of the beautiful Mediterranean island. The wine is thick, dense and very powerful on the close. Imported by A Marc de Grazia selection; various American importers. —M.L.

87 Baglio di Pianetto 2005 Cembali (Sicilia); \$34. Cembali is usually a spot on expression of Nero d'Avola, one of Sicily's best and most elaborate, but the 2005 vintage definitely seems on the overripe, alcoholic and jammy side. Ripe fruit aromas, toasted oak and smoked beef jerky push forth from the nose. Imported by Terlato Wines International. —M.L.

87 Cantine Barbera 2008 Nero d'Avola (Sicilia); \$15. Fun, simple and highly driven by dark fruit characteristics, this informal expression is a versatile partner to most meat or pasta recipes. The aromas include ripe fruit, blackberry and loads of cherry. Imported by Enotec Imports, Inc. —M.L.

87 Donnafugata 2008 Sedàra (Sicilia); \$15. Sedàra offers bright cherry flavors backed by dense blackberry and plum. There's a bitter almond note on the close, but all said, this ruby wine offers a lively, all-fruit experience. Imported by Folio Fine Wine Partners. —M.L.

87 Gulfi 2006 Nerosanlorè (Sicilia); \$NA. Gulfi regularly produces ripe, extracted wines that show a modern, intense side to Sicilian winemaking. This meaty Nero d'Avola offers thick aromas of exotic spice, black pepper and jammy blackberry. This big style will not appeal to everyone. Imported by Selected Estates of Europe Ltd. —M.L.

87 Tasca d'Almerita 2007 Regaleali (Sicilia); \$15. This is the kind of light and informal wine you can pair with pasta with fresh tomato sauce and basil. Made with Nero d'Avola grapes, it offers aromas of cherry, raspberry, almond and roasted pistachio nut. Imported by Winebow. —M.L.

87 Vasari 2006 Mamertino (Sicilia); \$NA. Mamertino is a warm and succulent red wine that delivers ripe aromas of cherry, blackberry and a touch of exotic spice. Imported by Italian Wine Growers. —M.L.

87 Zisola 2008 Nero d'Avola (Sicilia); \$25. Owned by the Mazzei brothers from Chianti Classico in Tuscany, this Sicilian venture offers elegant interpretations of warm climate winemaking. This luscious red wine shows ripe fruit characteristics and loads of spice and tobacco. Imported by Palm Bay International. —M.L.

86 Di Prima 2006 Gibilmoro (Sicilia); \$20. Gibilmoro, a pure expression of Nero d'Avola, sees some oak aging to shape aromas of toasted walnut, nutella and wood spice. In fact, not much of the natural fruit is left, and what is there feels jammy and ripe. Imported by Frank & Cheech Inc. —M.L.

86 Feudo Arancio Stemmari 2009 Nero d'Avola (Sicilia); \$8. Warm notes of raw, jammy fruit and moderate spice emerge from the nose. This native variety usually shows aromas of cherry, pistachio and almond and these very characteristics are evident here. Imported by Prestige Wine Imports Corp. **Best Buy.** —M.L.

86 MandraRossa 2007 Nero d'Avola (Sicilia); \$10. Aged in stainless steel to maintain the freshness of the wine's bright fruit aromas, this is a simple easy-drinking red. The wine shows good harmony and bright cherry and blackberry flavors on the close. Imported by Palm Bay International. **Best Buy.** —M.L.

86 Sallier de la Tour 2008 Nero d'Avola (Sicilia); \$10. This wine offers medium consistency and fresh notes of mature forest berry, spice and toasted almond. The wine is smooth with fresh crispness on the close: Pair it with lasagna or hearty pasta dishes. **Best Buy.** —M.L.

86 Valle dell'Acate 2008 Case Ibdini (Sicilia); \$15. Case Ibdini, the informal line of wines from Valle d'Acate, offers ripe fruit flavors of cherry liqueur and raspberry jam. This easy Sicilian red would make a good pairing companion to pork chops or grilled sausage with green peppers and onions. Imported by Polaner Selections. —M.L.

85 Badabing 2008 Nero d'Avola (Sicilia); \$NA. Badabing shoots forward simple fruit tones of cherry, raspberry and cranberry that wash clean over the palate. Pair this wine with simple pasta or pizza; it's an easy-drinking, no-fuss red. Imported by Grape Solutions. —M.L.

85 Feudo Montoni 2008 N (Sicilia); \$12. A simple and clean red wine with fruity aromas of strawberry, blueberry and raspberry jam. It's smooth and soft in the mouth with sweet berry flavors. Imported by Selected Estates of Europe Ltd. —M.L.

85 Natale Verga 2008 Nero d'Avola (Sicilia); \$10. Typical ripe fruit nuances of maraschino cherry and dried currant are on display here. The wine is simple and fruity in the mouth and ripe cherry really is the main theme of this easy-drinking red. Imported by Jandell Selections. **Best Buy.** —M.L.

84 Oriel 2004 Il Gattopardo (Sicilia); \$NA. Opens with overripe notes of strawberry, cooked cherry and blackberry preserves. Because the wine is from the 2004 vintage, there are also some tertiary aromas of spice, cola and tar. Imported by Oriel Wines. —M.L.

84 TerrAmore 2008 Nero d'Avola (Sicilia); \$NA. Made with organically grown fruit, this offers simple, no-fuss aromas of cherry, wild berry and raspberry. The wine is sharp and lively in the mouth and would pair with simple pasta dishes and meat ragù. Imported by Saranty Imports. —M.L.

83 Piccini 2008 Buon Appetito Nero d'Avola (Sicilia); \$NA. As its inviting name suggests, Buon Appetito will whet your appetite for hearty pasta with tomato sauce or even pizza. This fruit forward wine offers aromas of ripe cherry and blackberry with some green tones of dried herb at the back. Imported by Aveniù Brands, Inc. —M.L.

CABERNET SAUVIGNON

92 Tasca d'Almerita 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Sicilia); \$60. Tasca d'Almerita makes what may be the best expression of Cabernet Sauvignon on the island of Sicily. This is a thick and penetrating wine that delivers ripe thickness and determination without

loosing those focused aromas of spice and blackberry that are characteristic of the grape variety. Cellar this wine for a few more years. Imported by Winebow. **Cellar Selection.** —M.L.

88 Feudi del Pisciotto 2007 Missoni Cabernet Sauvignon (Sicilia); \$21.

This Cabernet Sauvignon, fashionably attired in a label made by designer Mission, delivers rich and mature aromas of blackberry, exotic spice, nutmeg and clove. It has a chewy, raw feel in the mouth (typical of warm climate wines) and delivers a blast of warm power on the close. Imported by Vias Imports. —M.L.

88 Feudo Principi di Butera 2003 San Rocco Cabernet Sauvignon (Sicilia); \$NA.

The Feudo Principi di Butera estate releases this Cab five or more years after the harvest, although a good argument could be made that it should be released sooner. Tertiary aromas of mineral and dried spice do appear and there's not much fruit left (especially in the hot 2003 vintage). Nonetheless, the wine is elegantly aged: Drink now. Imported by Zonin USA. —M.L.

88 Principe di Corleone 2005 Pollara Cabernet Sauvignon (Sicilia); \$NA.

There's a delicate, mineral-like note to this Cabernet Sauvignon that gives the wine a neat, compact feel in the mouth. Aromas are well measured and elegant and you'll see that the wine is much more expressive on the finish where it exhibits bursting berry flavors. Imported by Maurici Imports. —M.L.

87 Feudo Arancio Stemmari 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Sicilia); \$9.

From the estate's oldest vines this offers lively berry nuances backed by measured spice, leather and smoke. There's a good quality of berry fruit here and although the wine is simple and straightforward, it would match a long list of pasta and easy meat dishes. Imported by Prestige Wine Imports Corp. **Best Buy.** —M.L.

87 Viticoltori Associati Canicatti 2007 Aquilae Cabernet Sauvignon (Sicilia); \$NA.

Here's a ripe and jammy wine that shows aromas of blackberry preserves and candied plum that are typical of warm climate winemaking. Sweet, slightly astringent, tones pop up on the end and give this wine a determined, powerful finish.—M.L.

86 Sallier de la Tour 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (Sicilia); \$10.

A fresh and easy-going Cabernet Sauvignon that shows typical characteristics of the grape variety such as black pepper and black currant. This is not an overdone wine. In fact, it's fresh, easy to drink and closes with a touch of piquant spice. **Best Buy.** —M.L.

86 Sallier de la Tour 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Sicilia); \$NA.

This edition of Sallier de la Tour's Cabernet offers pulp and texture with aromas of black fruit, dried prune and some spicy or smoky tones at the end. The wine exhibits a thick, soft texture with sweet berry flavors. —M.L.

85 Feudo Principi di Butera 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Sicilia); \$NA.

Although this is from the relatively recent 2007 vintage, its aromas already seem dated. You'll get tones of Indian spice and old leather with dried tobacco, candied fruit and some herbal, green notes as well. In the mouth, the wine does offer a nice, linear feel with a dusty, mineral aftertaste. Imported by Zonin USA. —M.L.

MERLOT

91 Baglio di Pianetto 2005 Salici Merlot (Sicilia); \$27.

This delicious Merlot exhibits fine and elegant aromas of blackberry, cherry, graphite and lingering tones of smoke and spice. The mouthfeel is enormously generous and intense and wine does a great job of keeping your interest, sip after sip. Imported by Terlato Wines International. **Editors' Choice.** —M.L.

91 Planeta 2007 Merlot (Sicilia); \$40.

This full and generous Merlot (with a small percentage of Petit Verdot in the blend for extra richness) delivers beautifully elegant aromas of cherry, white mineral, spice, leather and dried tobacco. It is smooth and rich with a very fine quality of soft tannin. Imported by Palm Bay International. **Editors' Choice.** —M.L.

88 Feudi del Pisciotto 2007 Valentino Merlot (Sicilia); \$21.

Here is a heavily oak-driven expression of Merlot from Sicily that shows layers of cherry, blackberry, chocolate, exotic spice, leather and moist pipe tobacco. The wine is incredibly soft and yielding in the mouth with soft fruit tones on the close. Imported by Vias Imports. —M.L.

88 Feudo Principi di Butera 2003 Calat Merlot (Sicilia); \$NA.

From the faraway 2003 vintage (characterized by scorching hot temperatures), this Sicilian Merlot has done a pretty good job of maintaining its cherry and spice nuances. There are ripe fruit aromas here but the wine still has life in it: Drink up. Imported by Zonin USA. —M.L.

87 Feudo Arancio Stemmari 2008 Merlot (Sicilia); \$9.

Here's an easy but very well-priced Merlot from Sicily that would pair with a long list of pasta, chicken and home cooked meat dishes. Aromas include cherry, spice and almond: The mouthfeel is simple, clean and tight. Imported by Prestige Wine Imports Corp. **Best Buy.** —M.L.

87 Feudo Arancio Stemmari 2007 Merlot (Sicilia); \$9.

There's a full, ripe quality to this Sicilian Merlot that recalls cherry or blackberry preserves with spice, cinnamon and a touch of clove. The wine is very smooth on the palate with loads of cherry intensity on the close. Imported by Prestige Wine Imports Corp. **Best Buy.** —M.L.

87 Feudo Principi di Butera 2008 Merlot (Sicilia); \$17.

Here's a plump and ripe Merlot from Sicily with loads of cherry, blackberry and spice intensity. The wine is smooth and soft on the finish and offers a bright, cherry-driven fade. Pair this wine with marinated lamb chops. Imported by Zonin USA. —M.L.

87 Kris 2007 Heart Merlot (Sicilia); \$14.

Franz Haas, one of Italy's best producers from the north, has recently ventured into winemaking in the deep south. This shows great purity of fruit with aromas of raspberry, cherry, white almond and some lingering spice. Imported by Winebow. —M.L.

86 Cusumano 2008 Merlot (Sicilia); \$10.

Cusumano delivers an unoaked expression of Merlot from Sicily that won't break the bank. In fact, the wine is clean and polished with bright aromas of cherry, raspberry and light touches of almond paste. Imported by Vin Divino. **Best Buy.** —M.L.

86 Cusumano 2009 Merlot (Sicilia); \$10.

Here's a youthful and fresh Merlot from sunny Sicily that will satisfy your nose and tastebuds alike. Aromas include cherry, light cinnamon, leather, plum and blackberry. Pair this

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wine with pasta with fennel sausage and grated ricotta cheese. Imported by Vin Divino. **Best Buy.** —M.L.

86 Di Prima 2006 Gibilmoro Merlot (Sicilia); \$20. Ripe and raw notes of cherry preserves and mature blackberry are backed by powerful tones of spice, leather and tobacco. This sees six months in barrique for full, spice-driven finish. Imported by Frank & Cheech Inc. —M.L.

86 Feudo Principi di Butera 2007 Merlot (Sicilia); \$NA. Ripe and intense aromas of cherry, ripe raspberry and almond are backed by lingering tones of clove, cinnamon and allspice. The wine is rich and long lasting and would make a great pairing pasta to pasta al forno. Imported by Zonin USA. —M.L.

86 Sallier de la Tour 2007 Merlot (Sicilia); \$NA. A ripe and plummy expression, this wine is rich and velvety with loads of ripe cherry, blackberry and natural spice. The mouthfeel is soft, chewy and powerful.—M.L.

85 Sallier de la Tour 2008 Merlot (Sicilia); \$10. Jammy aromas are in line with warm climate winemaking. In the mouth, the wine delivers contrasting notes of sweet cherry with a slightly bitter finish. **Best Buy.** —M.L.

84 Lagaria 2008 Merlot (Sicilia); \$10. This well-priced Merlot has jammy aromas of cherry and blackberry folded within spice and leather. The wine is raw, chewy and succulent on the close. Imported by Empson (USA) Ltd.—M.L.

SYRAH

91 Planeta 2007 Syrah (Sicilia); \$40. One of Sicily's best expressions of Syrah, Planeta's rich and velvety wine offers elegant aromas of blackberry, cherry, smoked ham and crushed white pepper. The wine is smooth and long on the finish with loads of chocolate intensity. Imported by Palm Bay International. —M.L.

90 Caruso & Minini 2006 Delia Nivolelli Riserva Syrah (Sicilia); \$38. This Riserva Syrah exhibits aged aromas of spice, old leather and dried pipe tobacco. Tertiary aromas (the tones that develop as the wine ages) are already showing, so you'd better drink up now.

The finale is marked by loads of succulent black currant and plum. Imported by Vinifera Imports. —M.L.

90 Cottanera 2006 Sole di Sesta Syrah (Sicilia); \$NA. Aromas span from black fruit, to spice to smoked ham and the wine is soft and velvety on the finish. This thick and luscious Syrah offers a ripe and sunny wine experience that would pair with succulent steak or pork roast. Imported by Banville & Jones Wine Merchants.—M.L.

87 Cusumano 2008 Syrah (Sicilia); \$10. This bright, well-priced Syrah shows typical aromas of bright cherry, blueberry, smoked meat and peppercorn. The mouthfeel is equally attractive with plush ripeness and a soft, supple texture. Imported by Vin Divino. **Best Buy.** —M.L.

87 Feudo Arancio Stemmari 2007 Syrah (Sicilia); \$9. This ushers forth pretty aromas of blueberry, spice and white peppercorn. There's a sweet note of ripe fruit in the mouth and at this low price, you won't find a better deal. Imported by Prestige Wine Imports Corp. **Best Buy.** —M.L.

87 Valle dell'Acate 2008 Case Ibdini Syrah (Sicilia); \$16. This is an elegant expression of Syrah that relies on a clean presentation of ripe fruit aromas. You'll recognize mineral tones, black pepper and wild berry: The mouthfeel is plush and soft. Imported by Polaner Selections. —M.L.

86 Feudo Principi di Butera 2007 Syrah (Sicilia); \$NA. Here's an intense and darkly garnet Syrah with ripe aromas of blackberry preserves, cherry cola, spice, clove and black pepper. The wine is soft and velvety with a smoky aftertaste of cured meat. Imported by Zonin USA. —M.L.

86 MandraRossa 2007 Syrah (Sicilia); \$10. Easy and genuine, this unoaked expression of Syrah carries forth fresh aromas of blueberry, black cherry, spice and black pepper. It's an unassuming red wine that offers the pulp and consistency to pair with spaghetti and meat sauce. Imported by Palm Bay International. **Best Buy.** —M.L.

86 Sallier de la Tour 2007 Syrah (Sicilia); \$NA. Plump, ripe and filled

with bright blueberry aromas, this is a dark and dense Syrah that boats a thick, succulent texture and loads of intensity. It tastes ripe and jammy in the mouth and leaves a powerful note of cherry liqueur. —M.L.

85 Sallier de la Tour 2008 Syrah (Sicilia); \$10. Syrah is making a few successful appearances in Sicily and this expression from Sallier de la Tour shows the potential of this French grape as a value wine. It is smooth, fruit-driven and rich with medium consistency and loads of spice and blueberry. **Best Buy.** —M.L.

OTHER RED WINES

92 Firriato 2007 Ribeca (Sicilia); \$26. This impressive expression of Perricone (a native grape of southern Italy) will blow you away thanks to the purity and intensity of its black fruit aromas. This is not an overblown or exaggerated warm-climate wine. It maintains an elegant and focused quality to the end. Imported by Soilair Selection. **Cellar Selection.** —M.L.

91 Baglio di Pianetto 2005 Carduni (Sicilia); \$53. This is a lovely and sophisticated expression of Petit Verdot from Sicily with elegant graphite and mineral tones that back plum, prune, spice and loads of toasted nut. The wine is aged 16 months in oak, so those spice and smoke tones are also evident on the tasty finish. Imported by Terlato Wines International. —M.L.

91 Donnafugata 2006 Tancredi (Connessa Entellina); \$40. Tancredi is always a beautiful wine and this year's expression (a 70-30 blend of Nero d'Avola and Cabernet Sauvignon) offers great aromatic intensity with soft tones of cherry, vanilla and exotic spice. It closes with good structure and polished tannins. Imported by Folio Fine Wine Partners. —M.L.

91 Planeta 2007 Burdese (Sicilia); \$NA. This is an inky black blend of Cabernets Sauvignon and Franc that shows intense aromas of black fruit, tobacco, graphite mineral, tobacco and leather. The wine is full and generous in the mouth with soft, velvety tannins. Imported by Palm Bay International. —M.L.

91 Zisola 2007 Doppiozeta (Sicilia); \$60. Opens with a rich, saturated appearance, impressive complexity and intense

aromas of ripe fruit and spice. The blend sees Nero d'Avola, Syrah and Cabernet Franc, and you can recognize the amazing fruit characteristics of each variety. The oak is still very present on the nose, but the tannins are soft. Imported by Palm Bay International. —M.L.

90 Baglio del Cristo di Campobello 2007 Adènzia (Sicilia); \$19. Adènzia is a blend of Nero d'Avola, Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah from a dynamic new face in Sicilian winemaking. This deeply concentrated wine offers sweet spice, vanilla and cinnamon notes followed by ripe cherry and blackberry. Imported by Admiral Imports. —M.L.

90 Tasca d'Almerita 2007 Cygnus Red Blend (Sicilia); \$30. Cygnus is a very distinct blend of Nero d'Avola and Cabernet Sauvignon with intense aromas of barbecue sauce, liquid smoke, smoked ham and cola-like tones. The overall effect is thick, brooding and dense and this is the kind of wine you'll want to pair with succulent steak drenched in A-1 sauce. Imported by Winebow. —M.L.

89 Cusumano 2008 Benuara (Sicilia); \$16. This is a particularly well-balanced edition of Benuara (a 70-30 blend of Nero d'Avola and Syrah) that boasts a very nice quality and integrity of fruit followed by fresh aromas of blackberry, cherry and a shading of exotic spice. The low price will also win you over. Imported by Vin Divino. *Editors' Choice.*—M.L.

89 Duca di Salaparuta 2005 Triskelè (Sicilia); \$29. This is a very pleasant and elegant blend of Nero d'Avola, Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot that does a great job of presenting a united aromatic front. There are no loose edges here and the wine is compact and smooth in the mouth. Very nice. Imported by Wine Cellars. —M.L.

88 Valle dell'Acate 2006 Rusciano (Sicilia); \$30. Rusciano is a new wine from Valle dell'Acate (a blend of native Sicilian varieties and Syrah) that shows very ripe characteristics of cherry, raspberry and spice. You can taste the mature black fruit here thanks to the wine's chewy, succulent density. Imported by Polaner Selections. —M.L.

87 Caruso & Minini 2007 Sachia (Sicilia); \$20. Perricone is a little-known native variety found in southern Italy that

delivers ripe fruit aromas of blackberry, currants and some distant notes of smoked bacon or bresaola. The wine is luscious, succulent and slightly sweet on the close. Imported by Vinifera Imports. —M.L.

87 Duca di Salaparuta 2007 Calanica (Sicilia); \$12. This 60-40 blend of Nero d'Avola and Merlot offers excellent value for this low price. Aromas include ripe cherry, blackberry and spice and the wine is smooth on the close with a crisp touch of cleansing acidity at the end. Imported by Wine Cellars. *Best Buy.* —M.L.

87 Feudo Arancio Stemmari 2008 Pinot Nero (Sicilia); \$9. Here's a warm-climate Pinot Nero that shows all the characteristics aromas of the variety—wild berries, blue flowers and cherry—in a more pronounced and immediate manner. It's a bigger, more generous interpretation of the grape with a purely Sicilian signature. Imported by Prestige Wine Imports Corp. *Best Buy.* —M.L.

86 Ecco Domani 2008 Pinot Nero (Sicilia); \$15. A new generation of Sicilian brands has recently been experimenting with Pinot Noir in sunny Sicily. This expression, that is aged in stainless steel, shows a pretty garnet color and delicate aromas of raspberry, rose and violet. Imported by Gallo Of Sonoma Winery. —M.L.

84 Cielo e Terra 2008 Sangiovese (Sicilia); \$NA. The Cielo Group has been making Italian wines for more than a century and this Sicilian expression of Sangiovese delivers easy aromas of ripe cherry, vanilla and almond. It's an informal, one-dimensional wine that would pair with easy pasta dishes. —M.L.

82 Brugnano 2008 V90 (Sicilia); \$18. A blast of dillweed, green olive and caper comes off the nose of this Sicilian blend of Nero d'Avola and Merlot. In the mouth, however, you will taste soft black fruit. Imported by Elite Brands.—M.L.

ROSÉ WINES

86 Cantine Barbera 2009 La Bambina Rosé (Sicilia); \$15. There's a sweet element to the nose of this beautiful Sicilian rosé that recalls raspberry and almond marzipan. The wine glides clean over the plate with easy fresh-

ness and leaves small berry nuances on the close. Imported by Enotec Imports, Inc. —M.L.

85 Planeta 2009 Rosé (Sicilia); \$NA. Here's a beautifully pinkish rosé made from the Syrah grape in Sicily. You'll encounter aromas of cranberry, raspberry, peach and there's even a touch of pineapple at the back. The wine is crisp and smooth with a lively, bright personality. Imported by Palm Bay International. —M.L.

SICILY WHITE WINES

GRILLO

88 Duca di Salaparuta 2008 Kados (Sicilia); \$15. Kudos to Kados: Here's a lovely and surprisingly sophisticated white wine from Sicily (made with the native Grillo grape but fermented in oak for extra spice and zest) offered at an equally surprising low price. Great with fish or *spaghetti con vongole*, the wine shows light pulses of yellow flower, peach, white mineral and almond. Imported by Wine Cellars. *Editors' Choice.* —M.L.

88 Tasca d'Almerita 2008 Whitaker Mozia (Sicilia); \$NA. Fruit for this pristine white wines comes from old, head-trained vines on the tiny island of Mozia off the southern coast of Sicily. Packed tight with archeological remains, the island is managed by the Whitaker Foundation and this wine is part of a larger project to revive ancient viticulture and winemaking traditions. It's an excellent story and a wonderful wine. Imported by Winebow. —M.L.

87 Caruso & Minini 2008 Timpune (Sicilia); \$20. Timpune is a full-bodied expression of Grillo with mature notes of peach, apricot, melon and honey. There's a nicely fragrant note at the back and the wine would pair with cold pasta salad with cubed mozzarella and cherry tomatoes. Imported by Vinifera Imports. —M.L.

87 Feudi del Pisciotto 2007 Carolina Marengo (Sicilia); \$21. The label of this wine is made by fashion designer Carolina Marengo and proceeds of sales of this wine go to a Sicilian art restoration charity. This deeply oak-aged Grillo opens with a saturated golden color and segues to spicy aromas of cinnamon and

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vanilla cream backed by apricot and pear. The oak element is very strong here. Imported by Vias Imports. —M.L.

86 Fattorie Azzolino 2008 D'Incanto (Sicilia); \$NA. Fresh, tonic and redolent of cut grass, citrus and stone fruit, here's a great fish or tuna salad wine from sunny Sicily. The grape used is Grillo and the wine offers bright crispness on the close. —M.L.

86 Feudo Disisa 2008 Grillo (Sicilia); \$15. Aged only in stainless steel to ensure freshness and crispness of aromas, this bright Grillo offers cheerful and informal aromas of lemon rind, stone fruit, white mineral and almond. Imported by Vinifera Imports. —M.L.

85 Viticultori Associati Canicatti 2008 Aquilae (Sicilia); \$NA. Here's an easy Grillo that opens with bright tones of peach, citrus and a touch of freshly cut green grass. The mouthfeel is tonic, bright and fresh. Imported by Sober LLC. —M.L.

84 Badabing 2008 Grillo (Sicilia); \$NA. Badabing is a nice, easy drinking white with loads of ripe melon and peach. Imported by Grape Solutions. —M.L.

MARSALA

88 Florio NV Fine Sweet (Marsala); \$13. The sweet interpretation of Marsala offers a more dynamic and intense bouquet with aromas of marron glacé, honey-covered almonds, candied fruit and dried prune. Drink it alone after dinner or pair it with a very aged Pecorino cheese. Imported by Banfi Vintners. *Best Buy.* —M.L.

87 Florio NA Fine Dry (Marsala); \$13. Florio's Dry Marsala shows etched aromas of caramel, maple syrup, candied chestnut, butterscotch and dried prune. This historic fortified wine opens with a saturated almond color and offers an opulent, textured feel in the mouth. Imported by Banfi Vintners. —M.L.

OTHER WHITE WINES

92 Planeta 2009 Cometa (Sicilia); \$NA. Aromas of peach, honeysuckle and almond are irresistible but the wine really excels

in the mouth where it imparts opulent density and richness. This wine is an absolute pleasure to drink. A beautiful Sicilian wine that would pair with shellfish, crab cakes or white meat. Imported by Palm Bay International. —M.L.

91 Planeta 2008 Chardonnay (Sicilia); \$40. Here's a smooth and saturated Chard that beams strong with the Sicilian sunshine within. The bouquet opens with warm aromas of yellow rose, stone fruit, almond and creamy vanilla. In the mouth, it shows rich, full flavors that would pair with shellfish or white meat. Imported by Palm Bay International. —M.L.

91 Planeta 2008 Cometa (Sicilia); \$40. Cometa is a fantastic expression of Fiano from Sicily that reaches high marks in terms of purity, intensity and persistency. The wine is thick and smooth on the palate and imparts lasting flavors of stone fruit, honeydew melon and almond blossom. Imported by Palm Bay International. —M.L.

90 Donnafugata 2007 Chiarandà (Contessa Entellina); \$40. This is an absolutely beautiful white wine (made from a blend of Ansonica and Chardonnay) that delivers rich and opulent tones of stone fruit, mon blossom. The wine excels in the mouth thanks to its richness and smooth creaminess. Imported by Folio Fine Wine Partners. —M.L.

88 Baglio di Pianetto 2008 Ginolfo Viognier (Sicilia); \$26. A warm climate Viognier that shows fragrant aromas of wild flowers, honeysuckle, white violets and stone fruit. It shows a thick, fat feel in the mouth with loads of yellow fruit flavors on the close. Imported by Terlato Wines International. —M.L.

88 Planeta 2008 Alastro (Sicilia); \$21. Alastro is a food-friendly blend of Grecanico and Chardonnay. Grecanico adds fresh, floral aromas and the Chardonnay gives the wine its creamy, smooth texture. A percentage of the wine is aged in oak and this process lends aromas of spice and vanilla. Imported by Palm Bay International. —M.L.

88 Planeta 2008 La Segreta (Sicilia); \$16. Grecanico and Chardonnay (with other grapes) are blended here to shape the ultimate wine to pair with Mediterranean seafood dishes. Think spaghetti con vongole or fried calamari. Buttery notes of peach and apricot mix well

with crisp mineral elements. Imported by Palm Bay International. —M.L.

87 Calatrasi 2008 Terre di Ginestra BlanQ (Sicilia); \$18. This Sicilian blend of white grapes (with a large component of Sauvignon Blanc) shows pretty aromas of white flowers and exotic fruit. Mature melon and pear aromas give the wine a warm-climate identity as does its silky structure. Imported by Supreme Wines & Spirits. —M.L.

87 Cusumano 2008 Angimbé (Sicilia); \$14. This creamy and well-textured blend of Insolia and Chardonnay offers immediate aromas of melon, stone fruit and a touch of citrus. The wine would pair with shellfish or white meat. Imported by Vin Divino. —M.L.

87 Duca di Salaparuta 2008 Colomba Platino (Sicilia); \$13. This elegantly packaged Insolia has a pretty, luminous appearance and pristine notes of stone fruit, citrus and mineral. This is your quintessential seafood wine: grilled sea bass, poached salmon or steamed mussels would all taste great in this wine's company. Imported by Wine Cellars. —M.L.

87 Tenuta Rapitalà 2008 Casalj (Sicilia); \$NA. This light and refreshing blend of Catarratto (a Sicilian native grape) and Chardonnay represents the best of warm-climate white winemaking. The aromas are pure and simple, focused on wild flowers, dried herbs and citrus. In the mouth, that Chardonnay creaminess really kicks in. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd. —M.L.

86 Calatrasi 2008 Terre di Ginestra Viognier (Sicilia); \$18. Viognier does well in warm climates and this Sicilian expression of the French grape shows pretty floral nuances backed by white almond and orange blossom. Pair this wine with sea bass grilled in lemon leaves or fried squid. Imported by Supreme Wines & Spirits. —M.L.

86 Di Prima 2008 Pepita (Sicilia); \$15. This is an easy blend of Inzolia and Chardonnay (with a small component that is aged in oak) with a fresh fruity and floral approach. The oak element is all but invisible save for a touch of extra smoothness in terms of texture. Imported by Frank & Cheech Inc. —M.L.

86 I Vigneri 2008 Vinujancu (Sicilia); \$NA. From vintner Salvo Foti on Mount Etna in Sicily, this powerful white wine delivers aromas of honey, melon, butterscotch and apricot. The alcoholic presence helps keep the palate clean after fatty or cheesy foods. —M.L.

86 Maurigi 2008 Bacca Bianca (Sicilia); \$16. From the Tenuta di Budonetto vineyard near Piazza Armerina in central Sicily, this blend of Inzolia, Grecanico and Chardonnay offers citrusy aromas of lime and lemon followed by a fresh and crisp feel in the mouth. Pair this easygoing white blend with seafood and light pasta. Imported by USA Wine Imports. —M.L.

86 Valle dell'Acate 2008 Zagra (Sicilia); \$20. This blend of Grillo and Inzolia (30%) offers fresh floral tones of lemon and almond blossoms. There's some pulpy, peach-like notes in the mouth and the wine also delivers a playful touch of acidity on the close. Imported by Polaner Selections. —M.L.

85 Duca di Salaparuta 2008 Calanica (Sicilia); \$12. Here's a well-priced blend of Inzolia and Chardonnay from Sicily that performs perfectly as a light appetizer or finger food wine. There are zesty aromas here of citrus and lime and a dusty mineral note picks up the rear. It's light, lean and easy in the mouth. Imported by Wine Cellars. —M.L.

85 MandraRossa 2008 Fiano (Sicilia); \$10. Easy going and well priced, this light Fiano is an informal companion to summertime foods. Aromas here include peach, citrus and mineral and the wine is sharp and clean on the close. Imported by Palm Bay International. **Best Buy.** —M.L.

84 Fattorie Azzolino 2008 Tranoi (Sicilia); \$NA. This is a very light and informal Sicilian blend of Sauvignon Blanc and Catarratto (a native grape of the island) that would pair with tuna or chicken salad. The operative word, however, is light. —M.L.

84 Fazio 2008 Capo Soprano (Sicilia); \$NA. A Sicilian blend of Catarratto and Chardonnay, Capo Soprano lends the green fruit aromas of the first variety, with the peachy creaminess of the second. It's an easy-going expression with a compact, short feel in the mouth. Imported by Vinarium Inc. —M.L.

84 Maurigi 2009 Coste all'Ombra (Sicilia); \$22. This Sauvignon Blanc from Sicily offers strange aromas of menthol or peppermint over a thin, compact body. It offers nice freshness and a cooling, crisp close. Imported by USA Wine Imports. —M.L.

84 Natale Verga 2008 Grecanico (Sicilia); \$NA. Here's a simple, clean Grecanico with sharp mineral lines framed by aromas of white flowers, peach and citrus. It would wash down well with mixed Indian appetizers. Imported by Jandell Selections. —M.L.

OTHER ITALIAN RED WINES

BARDOLINO

88 Cantine Lenotti di Lenotti 2008 Le Olle (Bardolino Classico Superiore); \$NA. This is a limited-edition Bardolino Superiore Classico that shows impressive intensity and a darker, richer consistency. The wine is sweet and chewy with good succulence, loads of cherry flavors, and long persistency on the powerful finish. Try this wine with roast chicken or pork with fennel sauce. Imported by BelVino LLC. —M.L.

88 Villa Medici 2008 Bardolino Superiore; \$NA. This is a fantastic expression from the Lake Garda area. This dark and well-concentrated wine shows intense aromas of cherry, pomegranate, plum and fresh prune. There are also background shadings of exotic spice and the wine is sweet, rich and long lasting. Villa Medici presents a bold, modern interpretation of a traditional wine. —M.L.

87 Cantina Caorsa 2007 Bardolino Classico Superiore; \$NA. This is a ripe and generous expression of Bardolino Superiore (made from a traditional blend of Veronese grapes) that shows mature aromas of black cherry, blueberry and raspberry. The wine shows very good density and consistency and it leaves a lasting impression of ripe berry flavors that would stand up beautifully to aged cheese. —M.L.

87 Cantina del Castelnuovo del Garda 2009 Ca' Vegar (Bardolino Classico); \$NA. This expression of Bardolino really hits all the right marks. The wine is intense

and polished with vibrant aromas that recall a wild assortment of forest berries. It is smooth and supple in texture and there's a very cleaning, fresh note at the close that invites glass after glass. —M.L.

86 Bertoldi 2009 Terra Rossa (Bardolino Classico); \$NA. The impression n first impact is one of balance and harmony. It's a bright, ruby-colored Bardolino with fruit notes of blueberry and raspberry that work well with the wine's natural crispness. It is also characterized by a polished, drying finish that would pair with most Mediterranean dishes. —M.L.

86 Cantina di Custoza 2009 Val dei Molini (Bardolino Classico); \$NA. This is a friendly and inviting expression of Bardolino with pure fruit integrity and layers of wild berries and raspberries. It also shows a nice, smooth consistency on the palate with a touch of spice and more berry freshness on the close. Pair with lasagna or other baked pasta. Imported by Vias Imports. —M.L.

86 Montezovo 2009 Bardolino; \$NA. This luminous, ruby-colored Bardolino opens with sweet berry aromas that recall bright raspberry, blueberry and wild strawberry. The bouquet is bright, polished and refined and the wine performs nicely in the mouth where it delivers an enduring sensation of freshness. Pair this wine with appetizers and fried finger foods. Imported by Eurobiz Inc. —M.L.

85 Corte Fornello 2009 Bardolino; \$NA. Made with a blend of grapes that are traditionally cultivated in the Verona area, this is an easy-drinking red that would pair with home-cooked pasta meals or light meat dinners. Aromas include bright berry tones and the wine is lively and fresh on the finish. —M.L.

85 Frezza 2008 Colle San Lorenzo (Bardolino); \$NA. Bright berry aromas of forest fruit, ripe raspberry, cherry and casis open the nose of this ruby-colored Bardolino. Fruit for this easy-going wine is sourced from an amphitheater of vines on the San Lorenzo hills near Lake Garda. —M.L.

85 Valetti 2009 Bardolino Classico; \$NA. Designed to be consumed slightly chilled, this vibrant, ruby-colored Bardolino Classico offers loads of fruit intensity with almond nuances and slight shadings of exotic spice that

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fill in the background. It's a light and buoyant wine with a lean, compact consistency. —M.L.

84 Cantina del Castelnuovo del Garda 2008 Vintage (Bardolino); \$NA. Made from a traditional blend Corvina, Rondinella, Molinara, Sangiovese and Garganega grapes, this easy Bardolino is marked by sharp aromas of small forest berries, citrus and bramble. It offers bright acidity, smooth texture and slightly bitter, almond notes on the finale. —M.L.

84 Zeni 2009 Vigne Alte (Bardolino Classico); \$NA. Vigne Alte Bardolino boats a very immediate delivery of aromas that come forth as wild berry, white cherry and red apple. This is a simple and genuine wine with good intensity and purity. It leaves the palate clean and refreshed thanks to the natural freshness it imparts on the close. Imported by DS Trading Co. —M.L.

83 Ca' dei Rotti 2009 Bardolino; \$NA. Here is a cheerful Bardolino from the Garda area that exhibits slight effervescence and a bright, informal disposition. That delicate bubbling plus the wine's natural crispness make it a good candidate for pasta dishes with either cheese or butter. In the mouth, the wine is simple, clean and polished. —M.L.

OLTREPÒ PAVESE

87 Sant'Andrea 2005 Oltrepò Pavese; \$NA. Here's an older expression of Barbera from the Oltrepò Pavese region near Milan that shows shy complexity and sweet spice and pepper like notes. There is a prune and plum fruit component here that suggest the wine has held up nicely over the years (but probably won't last much longer). Drink now. —M.L.

86 Castel San Giorgio 2005 Becco Giallo Riserva (Oltrepò Pavese); \$NA. Here's a simple Barbera from northern Italy that offers mature tones of dried currants, plums and prunes. From the 2005 vintage, the Riserva expression also shows tertiary aromas of spice and smoke and there's a blast of fresh acidity and peppercorn on the close. —M.L.

86 Sant'Andrea 2008 Oltrepò Pavese; \$NA. Sant'Andrea is a small winery in Northern Italy and its recent release of Barbera offers sweet aromas of prunes, exotic spice and

black fruit. The aromas are simple and appear slightly aged. There's also a touch of alcoholic heat at the very end. —M.L.

LAZIO

91 Casale del Giglio 2007 Madreselva (Lazio); \$NA. This Bordeaux blend from Lazio, in central Italy, offers gorgeous intensity and ripe aromas of dark spice, black mineral, clove, blackberry, cherry cola, leather and espresso bean. It shows a modern, oak-aged side and loads of ripe fruit flavors on the long, spicy close. Imported by Soilair Selection. —M.L.

90 Casale del Giglio 2006 Madreselva (Lazio); \$60. Madreselva is a blend of Merlot, Petit Verdot and Cabernet Sauvignon with beautiful focus and intensity. Its aromas include blackberry, currant, spice and dark mineral and the mouthfeel is velvety and smooth. There's a fine quality of tannin here and the flavors lasts long on the finish. Imported by Soilair Selection. —M.L.

90 Casale del Giglio 2007 Mater Matuta (Lazio); \$60. One of the best wines to emerge from Lazio (the region of the Italian capital), this innovative blend of Syrah and Petit Verdot (15%) offers penetrating aromas of leather, espresso bean, dark chocolate and black cherry. It would pair with Rome's favorite pasta dishes including spaghetti carbonara. Imported by Soilair Selection. —M.L.

88 Casale del Giglio 2008 Petite Verdot (Lazio); \$24. Smokey tones of charcoal and dark granite or slate rise from the nose of this Lazio-based Petit Verdot. Dusty mineral notes are followed by dark, ripe fruit and the wine is long-lasting and penetrating on the close. Imported by Soilair Selection. —M.L.

88 Umberto Cesari 2008 Moma (Rubicone); \$NA. Moma is a Sangiovese-based wine with elements of Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot that lend structure and softness respectively. The nose boasts ripe fruit and loads of oak driven spice, vanilla, clove and cinnamon. Imported by Bedford International. —M.L.

87 Casale del Giglio 2008 Merlot (Lazio); \$20. A ripe and jammy expression of Merlot from central Italy with aromas of

black cherry, exotic spice, green peppercorn, leather and moist pipe tobacco. The wine is soft, smooth and extremely velvety on the close. Imported by Soilair Selection. —M.L.

87 Casale del Giglio 2008 Shiraz (Lazio); \$22. Casale del Giglio is making a very good reputation for itself thanks in part to this hearty Shiraz. The wine delivers typical aromas of crushed white pepper, blackberry and clove and it offers roasted espresso bean and chocolate covered cherry on the close. Imported by Soilair Selection. —M.L.

87 Tenuta di Pietra Porzia 2007 Regillo (Castelli Romani); \$14. From the Castelli Romani district just outside the confines of Rome, comes this dark and inky blend of Montepulciano, Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot with potent aromas of spice, dark fruit, blackberry and leather. There's a hint of red apple as well and the aromatic delivery is sharp and immediate. Imported by Vias Imports. —M.L.

87 Tenuta di Pietra Porzia 2007 Saula (Castelli Romani); \$13. The region of Lazio in central Italy is not well-known for its wines, but this well-priced 50-50 blend of Montepulciano and Merlot shows its enological potential. This is a rich and penetrating wine with loads of black fruit and spice. Imported by Saranty Imports. —M.L.

MONTEPULCIANO

89 Binomio 2006 Montepulciano d'Abruzzo; \$50. This is a mammoth wine with an inky, impenetrable appearance and intense aromas of dark spice, crushed black pepper, clove and every sort of mature black fruit you can imagine. The tannins are firm and solid and the wine packs a powerful punch of concentration and alcoholic power. Imported by Dalla Terra Winery Direct. —M.L.

87 La Canosa 2007 Musè (Marche); \$NA. This is an inky black and impenetrable expression of Montepulciano from central Italy with dark spice aromas lavished over Maraschino cherry, blackberry and prune. Oak notes of spice, vanilla and black pepper fill in the background. The wine is firmly tannic on the close. —M.L.

85 Carlo Mario Margiotta 2005 Pentima (Montepulciano d'Abruzzo); \$15. This hearty Montepulciano d'Abruzzo from a relatively hot vintage (2005) offers loads of ripe, jammy fruit, plum and prune backed by exotic spice and black peppercorn. The wine shows solid, dark tannins on the close. Imported by R&R Wine Imports Inc. —M.L.

UMBRIA

92 Lungarotti 2005 Rubesco Riserva Vigna Monticchio (Torgiano); \$57. Chiara Lungarotti says that this vintage of her vineyard-designate Riserva represents a milestone for her family run estate. Indeed, this is a rich and elegant red wine that shows signature notes of wild berry and spice that reflect her beloved territory: Umbria. Imported by Vin Divino. —M.L.

91 Lungarotti 2006 Sagrantino di Montefalco; \$48. Sagrantino is a powerful and densely tannic wine that is gaining popularity in Italy and abroad. Lungarotti works hard to tame this variety through careful oak aging and low yields in the vineyard. The beautiful results boast dark fruit and exotic spice highlights. Imported by Vin Divino. —M.L.

91 Lungarotti 2004 San Giorgio (Umbria); \$62. San Giorgio is an historic wine that represents an international variety, Cabernet Sauvignon, married to a local one: Sangiovese. The results are soft and generous and although you can recognize characteristics of both, the fruit is perfectly ripe and balanced. Imported by Vin Divino. —M.L.

89 Cantina Tudernum 2006 Sagrantino di Montefalco; \$NA. Here is a rich, dense and nicely saturated Sagrantino with lively aromas of sweet spice, cinnamon, nutmeg and dark berry or plum. You'll taste the wine's thick tannins and enjoy its spicy aftertaste. Drink after 2013. —M.L.

89 Lungarotti 2007 Montefalco Rosso; \$28. Montefalco Rosso is a blend of Sangiovese, Sagrantino and Merlot that shows impressive balance and integration. The wine's soft cherry and berry nuances come from the Sangiovese and Merlot components and the Sagrantino adds structure and persistency. Imported by Vin Divino. —M.L.

89 Tenuta Alzatura 2006 Uno di Nove (Sagrantino di Montefalco); \$NA.

This is a dark and spicy expression of Sagrantino from Umbria that showcases deep aromas of clove, Christmas spice and nutmeg. The fruit tones here are on the ripe, jammy side and the wine hits the palate with determined, firm tannins. Imported by Banfi Vintners. —M.L.

88 Poggio Bertaiò 2006 Stucchio (Umbria); \$20. This dark and sophisticated expression of Sangiovese from central Italy shows deep aromas of ripe fruit, black currant, spice, tobacco and moist earth. It boasts a smooth, velvety feel that would stand up nicely to lasagna or meatloaf. Imported by Vias Imports. —M.L.

87 Bigi 2009 Vipra Rossa (Umbria); \$13. Packaged in a handsome bottle with an embossed viper on the front, this blend of Merlot, Sangiovese (with a small percentage of Montepulciano for extra power and intensity) offers easy sensations of ripe fruit and exotic spice. The low price makes it even more attractive. Imported by Opici Wines. —M.L.

87 Lungarotti 2007 Rubesco (Torgiano); \$15. This is a mostly Sangiovese-based wine that shows special territorial characteristics of Umbria in central Italy. The fruit is lively, bright and fresh tones of wild berries make this a versatile and food-friendly choice. Imported by Vin Divino. —M.L.

86 Benincasa 2006 Montefalco Rosso; \$14. Montefalco Rosso is a blend of Sangiovese, Sagrantino and Merlot from Umbria in central Italy with aromas of cherry, wild berry, spice and cola. The wine is light and easy-going and would make a good partner to pizza or simple pasta dishes. Imported by Terra Verus Trading Co. LP. —M.L.

84 Benincasa 2007 Vincastro (Umbria); \$8. This easy 80-20 blend of Sangiovese and Merlot opens with a dark garnet hue and mature aromas of jammy fruit and spice. The wine shows power and grit and would pair with a cheesy pasta dish. Imported by Terra Verus Trading Co. LP. **Best Buy.** —M.L.

OTHER RED WINES

91 Cescon Italo Storia e Vini 2006 Amaranto 72 Riserva (Veneto); \$NA. Here's an inky dark and impenetrable blend of Cabernets Sauvignon and Franc, Merlot and Marzemino. This is a seriously dense and rich expression with loads of mature fruit and spice that make for a layered and complex whole. The wine also shows tight, firm tannins. Imported by Bacco Wine & Spirit, LLC. —M.L.

88 Umberto Cesari 2007 Riserva (Sangiovese di Romagna); \$NA. Packaged in a big, heavy bottle, this Riserva Sangiovese shows elegant tones of wild berry, blue flowers, moist earth and spice. This is a very traditional take on Italy's favorite indigenous variety with a soft, silky close. Imported by Bedford International. —M.L.

87 Cescon Italo Storia e Vini 2007 Chieto (Veneto); \$NA. This inky black blend of Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot delivers a thick, impenetrable appearance with jammy notes of blackberry preserves and maraschino cherry. It presents chewy, succulent fruit but is not overdone or too heavy on the close. Imported by Bacco Wine & Spirit, LLC. —M.L.

87 Desmonta 2006 Riserva Merlot (Arcole); \$NA. Here is a very distinctive expression of Merlot with ripe aromas of black cherry and prune, backed by leather, tobacco, moist earth and smoked ham or cured meat. The wine delivers power and determination on the finish with soft, smooth tannins and a vibrant cherry aftertaste. —M.L.

87 La Canosa 2007 Nullius (Marche); \$NA. Nullius is a modern expression of Sangiovese with oak-driven aromas of vanilla, cinnamon, exotic spice and mesquite. There is cherry and ripe blackberry fruit here, but the wine is mostly focused on spice nuances. —M.L.

86 Umberto Cesari 2009 Ca' Grande (Sangiovese di Romagna); \$NA. Ca' Grande is a simple, crisp and light expression of Sangiovese from central Italy that offers clean pulses of cherry, cassis and blue flower. Pair this no-fuss wine with pasta and ragù or cheesy pizza. Imported by Bedford International. —M.L.

85 Collis Veneto Wine Group 2008 Arcole; \$NA. Ripe, almost jammy aromas of plum, prune and candied fruit open the nose of this blend of Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon (the Cabernet is partially air-dried to create more aromatic intensity). You'll also notice some green, herbal notes that are characteristic of Cabernet and the wine is round, smooth and slightly sweet on the close. —M.L.

ROSÉ WINES

87 Tenute Rubino 2009 Saturnino Rosato (Salento); \$NA. The Salento, or the tip of the "heel" of the boot of Italy, is an excellent area for rosé. Arguably it is the best. This expression made from native Negroamaro grapes offers a bright ruby color and sweet aromas of raspberry, almond and wild cherry. Imported by Panebianco. —M.L.

86 Cantele 2009 Negroamaro Rosato (Salento); \$NA. This Negroamaro-based rosé from the south of Italy boasts a bright pink color with ruby hues and aromas of white cherry, raspberry, cranberry and pink rose. In fact, pretty floral aromas do a nice job of filling in the back. Imported by Vias Imports. —M.L.

86 Pala 2009 Chiaro di Stelle (Isola dei Nuraghi); \$NA. Chiaro di Stelle is a bright rosé with deep ruby and garnet highlights. From an aromatic point of view, the wine focuses on wild berries and dried herbs such as sage, oregano and basil. In the mouth, it shows density and silkiness. Imported by Banville & Jones Wine Merchants. —M.L.

85 Pala 2009 Silenzi (Isola dei Nuraghi); \$NA. Delicate and feminine, this rosé from Sardinia delivers clean aromas of raspberry, wild strawberry, white cherry and a touch of lemon zest. There's a mineral note at the back and the wine also boasts some of the herbal aromas that are so often associated with Mediterranean flavors. Imported by Banville & Jones Wine Merchants. —M.L.

85 Tre Colline 2009 Bardolino Chiaretto; \$NA. This is a very interesting rosé Chiaretto with a cheerful array of aromas that span from rose petal, to dried herbs to white mineral. The wine boasts a luminous, pink color and it washes smooth over the palate with zippy freshness and a compact consistency. —M.L.

84 Carlo Mario Margiotta 2007 Cretara (Montepulciano d'Abruzzo Cerasuolo); \$10. This is a dark ruby rosé wine with a subdued nose that is accented by raspberry and cassis aromas. The wine shows sharp acidity and some almond like bitterness on the close. Imported by R&R Wine Imports Inc. —M.L.

84 Le Muraglie 2009 Biro (Bardolino Chiaretto); \$NA. With ancient roots that date back to 1624, this family-run winery presents an easy-drinking Chiaretto with vibrant aromas of raspberry, white cherry and violets. The mouthfeel is light and compact and although the wine is relatively thin and informal, it does a great job keeping the palate clean. —M.L.

84 Valetti 2009 Bardolino Chiaretto; \$NA. Valetti's beautifully luminous rosé opens with subdued but pristine aromas of raspberry, white cherry and pink grapefruit. Bitter almond and slight shadings of dried herb appear on the finish and the wine boasts a very clean, upfront feel in the mouth. —M.L.

83 Ca' dei Rotti 2009 Bardolino Chiaretto; \$NA. A bright pink color characterizes this fragrant Bardolino Chiaretto. The wine boasts simple, clean lines with aromas of raspberry, pomegranate, white cherry and drying mineral. It's thin and fresh on the close and would make a great pairing partner to ravioli filled with cream and salmon sauce. —M.L.

OTHER ITALIAN WHITE WINES

SOAVE

88 Filippi 2006 Vigne della Brà (Soave); \$21. Unlike any other Soave you will taste, this wine rests on the lees for 20 months to shape aromatic intensity and create smoothness in the mouth. You will recognize aromas of peach cobbler and baked bread; there's a playful touch of grapefruit at the end. Imported by Omniwines Distribution. —M.L.

88 Le Battistelle 2007 Battistelle (Soave Classico); \$26. Partly aged in oak, this bright Soave Classico delivers aromas of peach, apricot, yellow fruit and a touch of almond paste. Pair with scallops or grilled shrimp. The

natural acidity will keep your palate refreshed. Imported by Bonhomie Wine Imports. —M.L.

88 Monte Tondo 2007 Foscarin Slavonus (Soave Classico Superiore); \$30. Here's a mature and sophisticated style of Soave with ripe aromas of apricot, peach, honey and butterscotch. The wine is thick and creamy in the mouth with loads of apricot like flavors on the finish. Imported by Clyde Thomas. —M.L.

87 Bertani 2009 Sereole (Soave); \$15. Sereole Soave boasts the intensity and pristine qualities of a very well-made wine. Its appearance is crisp and crystalline and the aromas of citrus, peach and dried sage are vivid. Imported by Palm Bay International. —M.L.

87 Ca' Rugate 2008 Monte Fiorentina (Soave Classico); \$17. A sophisticated Soave Classico that evokes a studied, more contemplated style. It opens with a bright golden color and offers aromas of mature melon, peach and apricot. There's also a hint of white almond paste and the wine is crisp and enduring on the close. Imported by VOS Selections. —M.L.

87 Ca' Rugate 2008 Monte Alto (Soave Classico); \$19. This opulent Soave Classico is made from native Garganega grapes that see a bit of oak aging to acquire subtle tones of roasted almond and smoky mineral. Cool acidity caps the close and promises to match spicy chicken curry. Imported by VOS Selections. —M.L.

87 Ca' Rugate 2007 Monte Alto (Soave Classico); \$19. There is an austere, serious nature to this Soave Classico that is articulated with aromas of drying mineral, almond, mature peach and apricot. The wine shows weight and persistency on the palate and could pair with fried fish or chicken. Imported by VOS Selections. —M.L.

87 Cambrago 2008 I Cérceni (Soave Classico); \$NA. This Soave Classico stands apart in the crowd thanks to its natural heft and rich consistency. You can feel the glycerin on the tongue; the wine leaves a fresh impression of peach, melon and pear. Imported by Fruit of the Vines, Inc. —M.L.

87 Cantina di Soave 2008 Rocca Sveva Castelcerino (Soave Classico Superiore); \$NA. Castelcerino opens with

aromas of dried hay, stone fruit, citrus and mineral. It's an easy-drinking and crisp white wine that would pair with vegetable risotto (asparagus, artichoke or radicchio) topped with parmigiano cream. Imported by MW Imports. —M.L.

87 Cecilia Beretta 2009 Brognoligo (Soave Classico); \$NA. Here's an exemplary Soave Classico with a vibrant, luminous appearance and inviting aromas of white flower, dried sage, honey, peach and Golden Delicious apple. It washes clean over the tongue thanks to its natural consistency and fresh acidity. Imported by Casa Bruno. —M.L.

87 Coffele 2009 Ca' Visco (Soave Classico); \$18. A sweet-smelling Soave with simple aromas of peach, pear and honey presented in a very direct and immediate manner. It's thick and compact on the finish with loads of pineapple-like flavors. Imported by Slocum & Sons, Inc. —M.L.

87 Corte Moschina 2008 I Tarai (Soave); \$NA. This rare late-harvest Soave shows elegant and refined aromas of honey, dried apricot, almond and pineapple backed by drying mineral touches. The texture shows delicious thickness, succulence and the wine glides smoothly over the palate, driven by its silky glycerin and creamy extraction. —M.L.

87 Monte Tondo 2007 Casette Foscarin (Soave Classico); \$20. This Soave Classico from the 2007 vintage opens with a saturated, golden color and mature notes of apricot, honey and melon. There's a distinctive mineral note at the back that puts an elegant spin on those ripe fruit flavors. Imported by Clyde Thomas. —M.L.

87 Monte Tondo 2008 Soave Classico; \$17. Beautifully rich and intense, with ripe aromas of peach, apricot, grapefruit and melon. The wine is smooth and filling on the palate and the fresh acidity would match steamed asparagus with melted butter. Imported by Clyde Thomas. —M.L.

87 Prà 2008 Monte Grande (Soave Classico); \$25. A sophisticated Soave Classico with aromas of almond and honey that appear on the heels of stone fruit and Golden Delicious apple. You'll like the consistency and freshness of this wine and its cleansing mineral tones. Imported by Vinifera Imports. —M.L.

87 Roccolo Grassi 2007 Vigneto La Broia (Soave); \$20. Roccolo Grassi produces beautiful Amarone and applies a quality winemaking philosophy to all the estate wines. This oak-fermented Soave is simple, but sincere with pristine mineral, peach and citrus aromas. Imported by Chambers & Chambers. —M.L.

87 Sandro de Bruno 2007 Campogrande (Soave Superiore); \$23. A more evolved and sophisticated expression of Soave with creamy aromas of ripe melon and peach backed by mineral tones and toasted almond. Pair this wine with asparagus risotto with parmigiano cream. Imported by Supreme Wines & Spirits. —M.L.

87 Sartori 2009 Sella (Soave Classico); \$NA. Truly delicious, with bright mineral tones that are wrapped tight around aromas of citrus, peach and Golden Delicious apple. There's soft creaminess in the mouth and loads of bright intensity that makes it easy to love and easy to drink. Imported by Banfi Vintners. —M.L.

87 Suavia 2006 Le Rive (Soave Classico); \$NA. Made with Garganega grapes, this is a more saturated expression of Soave Classico with a deeper golden color and bright aromas of melon, peach, apricot and dried herbs. The wine shows very good richness and consistency on the finish. Imported by Vias Imports. —M.L.

87 Tenuta Sant'Antonio 2008 Monte Ceriani (Soave); \$11. You'll enjoy this crisp Soave tremendously thanks to its crystalline aromas of citrus, peach and pear and its fresh, cleansing mouthfeel. This is one of those quintessential Italian whites that will pair with informal Mediterranean cuisine. Imported by Dalla Terra Winery Direct. —M.L.

87 Tommasi 2009 Le Volpare (Soave Classico); \$14. There's a grassy, herbal characteristic here that rides on the heels of peach, citrus and white mineral. Le Volpare is a steady, food-friendly wine that offers excellent pairing attributes for rice salad, chicken, Thai food and grilled vegetables. Imported by Rolar. —M.L.

86 Albino Armani 2007 Incontro (Soave); \$20. Incontro (*encounter* in Italian) is a ripe, fruit-forward Soave with plenty of pretty peach and floral tones. This is a crisp,

food-friendly white wine that would work with appetizers and fried calamari. Imported by Underdog Wine Merchants. —M.L.

86 Bertani 2009 Soave Classico; \$13. This is a perfect wine to buy by the case to keep at hand for informal occasions with family and friends. It delivers clean aromas of citrus, peach and pear and keeps the tongue refreshed with its bright crispness. Imported by Palm Bay International. —M.L.

86 Ca' Rugate 2009 San Michele (Soave Classico); \$13. This is packed tight with mineral and herbal aromas that come on the heels of stone fruit and citrus. This is a fresh and fragrant appetizer wine that keeps your palate polished and refreshed. Imported by Vos Selections. —M.L.

86 Ca' Rugate 2008 San Michele (Soave Classico); \$13. A bright, immediate delivery of fresh tones of cut grass, white flowers and citrus emerge from the nose of this cheerful Soave Classico. The wine promises food-friendliness on all levels thanks to the simplicity of its style and its crisp acidity. Imported by VOS Selections. —M.L.

86 Cantina del Castello 2008 Pressoni (Soave Classico); \$NA. Very attractive freshness emerges here, blended within pretty folds of floral and peachy aromas. The mouthfeel is simple and genuine with drying mineral tones and zesty crispness. —M.L.

86 Cantina di Soave 2008 Rocca Sveva (Soave Classico); \$15. This is a dry, crisp and refreshing white wine with polished mineral aromas backed by peach, citrus and white flower. It has good weight and texture for an easy Soave and would work with fish, fried calamari or mussels in garlic and tomato sauce. Imported by MW Imports. —M.L.

86 Franchetto 2009 La Capelina (Soave); \$NA. This distinctive expression of Soave puts emphasis on brawn and power with aromas of mature fruit, apricot and cantaloupe. The aromatic intensity is standout and the wine follows through onto the palate with fresh intensity and playful touches of piquant spice. —M.L.

86 Latium di Morini 2009 Campo le Calle (Soave); \$20. This is a fun and

BUYING GUIDE

informal Soave with vibrant aromas of citrus, peach, white flower and mineral. It tastes fresh and crisp and would pair with fried finger foods. Imported by USA Wine Imports. —M.L.

86 Le Battistelle 2008 Montesei (Soave Classico); \$15. Fresh and citrusy, with background aromas of peach, pear, sage and mineral notes. The wine is clean and easy on the palate and would pair with chilled pasta salad. Imported by Bonhomie Wine Imports. —M.L.

86 Monte Tondo 2008 Corte del Sole (Soave); \$10. Fresh crispness is what you notice first in this luminous and bright Soave. Made from Garganega grapes, the wine boasts aromas of lemon zest, white mineral and pear. Imported by Clyde Thomas. **Best Buy.** —M.L.

86 Montesor 2008 Capitel Alto (Soave Classico); \$14. Opens with a bright golden color and aromas of apricot, peach, melon and a touch of butterscotch. It offers a compact, fresh feel in the mouth and leaves lingering flavors of stone fruit on the close. Imported by W.J. Deutsch & Sons. —M.L.

86 Prà 2008 Staforte (Soave Classico); \$22. This crisp and light Soave Classico cleans the palate thanks to its well-integrated acidity and streamlined feel. It's a fresh and easy-going alternative to Pinot Grigio that would pair just as successfully with chicken salad or Chinese take-out. Imported by Vinifera Imports. —M.L.

86 Santi 2008 Vigneti di Monteforte (Soave Classico); \$NA. Fresh and easy going, this informal Soave Classico offers an array of aromas that include citrus, mineral and dried herbs. Pair this wine with Chinese chicken salad or vegetable spring rolls. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd. —M.L.

86 Tessari 2008 Grisela (Soave Classico); \$18. This Soave Classico shows a luminous golden color and subdued aromas of dried herbs and white mineral or talc powder. More fruit tones appear in the mouth, especially peach and citrus, and the wine is bright and polished on the close. Imported by Enotec Imports, Inc. —M.L.

86 Tommasi 2008 Le Volpare (Soave Classico); \$13. This is a bright Soave Classico that offers aromas of lemon zest, freshly

cut green grass and fine talc powder. It tastes fresh and zippy and has the natural crispness to pair with fried zucchini flowers stuffed with mozzarella and anchovies. Imported by Rolar. —M.L.

85 Agostino Vicentini 2009 Vigneto Terre Lunghe (Soave); \$NA. Made from a blend of native grapes Garganega and Trebbiano, this luminous Soave opens with bright aromas of lemon zest, peach and Golden Delicious apple. It takes on a very lively personality in the mouth thanks to its bright freshness and those tangy lemony tones. —M.L.

85 Cambrago 2009 Vigne Maires (Soave); \$NA. Pretty floral nuances of jasmine, honeysuckle and acacia are backed by subtle hints of dried sage and basil. This luminous Soave has all its aromatic elements perfectly in line. The wine is smooth and crisp, with medium heft. Imported by Fruit of the Vines, Inc. —M.L.

85 Cantina del Castello 2008 Castello (Soave Classico); \$NA. Castello Soave Classico offers easy aromas of jasmine, honeysuckle and a saccharine like note of cotton candy or lemon soda. It's linear and compact in the mouth with a drying, mineral finish. —M.L.

85 Cantina di Monteforte 2009 Terre di Monteforte (Soave Classico); \$NA. Pleasing aromas of stone fruit, grapefruit and white mineral make a very nice first impression: This Soave Classico would pair perfectly with exotic dishes borrowing from Chinese or Thai culinary tradition. It's thin and informal in the mouth, but the natural acidity keeps your palate refreshed. —M.L.

85 Cantina di Monteforte 2009 Vicario (Soave Classico); \$NA. Vicario is a light and luminous Soave Classico with loads of easy fruit and mineral character. This is exactly the type of wine you'll want to pair with tuna carpaccio, seafood salad or light risotto. The wine is smooth, refreshing and tonic. —M.L.

85 Coffele 2009 Soave Classico; \$13. Easygoing and clean, this pretty wine does a good job of keeping the palate refreshed. It shows aromas of stone fruit and dried herbs and would pair with salads or appetizers. Imported by Slocum & Sons, Inc. —M.L.

85 Ferraretto 2008 Soave; \$NA. Here's an easy-going and fresh Soave with distinctive notes of almond paste and sweet marzipan backed by drying mineral and stone fruit. The aromas are truly unique and beg a pairing with almond encrusted fish or Asian dishes with coconut milk. —M.L.

85 Filippi 2008 Castelcerino (Soave); \$15. Made with organically farmed fruit, this bright Soave shows light shadings of peach, pear, sage, white mineral and a touch of butterscotch. The wine is creamy and smooth in the mouth and would pair with prosciutto sliced thin over ripe cantaloupe. Imported by Omnivines Distribution. —M.L.

85 Prà 2009 Soave Classico; \$15. Prà's base Soave Classico is a crisp and clean white with measured tones of citrus and stone fruit. It's a snappy, zesty wine that would pair well with appetizers and finger foods. Imported by Vinifera Imports. —M.L.

85 Sandro de Bruno 2007 Colli Scaligeri (Soave); \$19. This is a very interesting and ultimately very likeable Soave with ripe aromas of banana, pineapple and loads of almond marzipan. The wine is light and short on the palate but those aromatic aftertastes stay etched in your memory. Imported by Supreme Wines & Spirits. —M.L.

84 Le Crosare 2008 Montecletha (Soave Classico); \$NA. Simple, clean and linear, this Soave Classico delivers aromas of honey, peach, dried herbs and mineral in a direct and sincere manner. There's sharp crispness here that helps keep the palate refreshed and the wine can be happily served at picnics. —M.L.

84 Monte del Frà 2007 Soave Classico; \$15. This is a mature expression of Garganega that shows elements of overripe melon and peach. Polished mineral notes appear in the mouth and the wine is easy and thin overall. Imported by Victoire Imports. —M.L.

84 Villa Erbice 2007 Soave Superiore; \$13. This is a thin, compact white wine that shows simple aromas of citrus, mineral and pear. Imported by Masciarelli Wine Co. —M.L.

83 Cantina del Castello 2007 Carniga (Soave Classico); \$NA. There are slightly dulled or aged characteristics of apricot,

melon and butterscotch. It livens up in the mouth thanks to its stone fruit flavors although the finish tastes heavy and thick. —M.L.

83 Zeni 2008 Marogne (Soave Classico); \$NA. An evolved Soave Classico with a golden appearance and mature aromas of melon, peach, apricot and yellow rose. In the mouth the wine is soft and rich. You could pair this wine with more structured foods such as chicken curry or baked fresh water fish with butter. Imported by DS Trading Co. —M.L.

LUGANA

87 Fabiano 2006 Argillaia (Lugana); \$24. Bright citrus notes open the nose of this golden Lugana and are followed by aromas of almond paste, pineapple and crushed mineral. You could pair this wine with shellfish or crustaceans thanks to the natural thickness and smoothness of its texture. Imported by Admiral Imports. —M.L.

87 Ottella 2009 Le Creete (Lugana); \$NA. Turbiana (also known as Trebbiano di Lugana) grapes shape this luminous, freshly aromatic white wine. Aromas here include peach, apricot, yellow rose, citrus blossom and light touches of crushed mineral. The wine is compact and drying on the finish. Pair with fresh water fish such as salmon or trout. —M.L.

87 Sansonina 2008 Lugana; \$NA. This luminous Lugana (presented in a very elegant transparent bottle) boasts bright aromas of peach, light apricot tones and lemon zest backed by white mineral tones. In the mouth, the wine is generous and full with deliciously integrated acidity and sweet fruit. Imported by Winebow. —M.L.

87 Zenato 2009 San Benedetto (Lugana); \$14. This pretty Trebbiano-based white offers aromas of peach, pear and white mineral followed by layers of white almond and honeysuckle. Pair this delicious wine with lake fish, shrimps or oysters. Imported by Winebow. —M.L.

86 Costaripa 2008 Pievecroce (Lugana); \$NA. The Trebbiano di Lugana grape offers smooth texture with bright aromas of ripe fruit, apricot and honeydew. Thanks to that extra structure, you can pair this

wine with pasta or chicken salad. Imported by Empson (USA) Ltd. —M.L.

86 S. Cristina 2009 Massoni White Blend (Lugana); \$NA. A pretty wine showing fruit, floral and mineral characteristics that make for enticing harmony and balance. There's a touch of peachy sweetness on the close and the wine is enduring and fresh on the finish. Imported by Winebow. —M.L.

86 Santi 2009 Melibéo (Lugana); \$NA. Melibéo characterizes the natural freshness and easy informality of the Lugana region. The wine invites and surprises the palate with its tonic aromas of peach, pear, sage and honey. Those aromas are followed by medium consistency and perky crispness. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd. —M.L.

85 Tommasi 2009 Il Sestante Vigneto San Martino (Lugana); \$16. Il Sestante Lugana opens with easy, informal aromas of white flower, citrus and cut grass. There's a mineral element as well that lends harmony and balance: Pair this wine with finger foods and appetizers. Imported by Rolar. —M.L.

84 Bennati 2009 Soraigne (Lugana); \$NA. This is a small, boutique winery that has carefully selected fruit for this fresh and compact Lugana. There are subdued aromas here of peach, honeydew, mineral and dried grass. The wine cuts clean over the palate with natural acidity but it also offers sweet peach flavors. —M.L.

CUSTOZA

87 Montresor 2009 Monte Fiera (Custoza); \$NA. This crystalline Custoza boasts a very well-balanced array of citrus, peach and drying mineral notes that hit the nose in a unified, harmonious manner. This wine performs particularly well in the mouth thanks to the natural creaminess and refreshing crispness. Imported by W.J. Deutsch & Sons. —M.L.

86 Cantina del Castelnuovo del Garda 2009 Ca' Vegar (Custoza); \$NA. Peach, honey, lemon zest and white flower come off the nose of this light and luminous wine. Friendly and informal, this wine will wash down with light meals and salads. —M.L.

86 Cantina di Custoza 2008 Custodia Le Noci (Custoza Superiore); \$NA. You'll love the zesty freshness and natural crispness of this bright Custoza Superiore. It shows pretty aromas of yellow rose, honey, melon and loads of ripe peach. The mouthfeel is smooth and creamy but the wine never feels heavy or fat. Suited for informal occasions. Imported by Vias Imports. —M.L.

86 Gorgo 2009 Podere San Michelin (Custoza); \$NA. Cheerful and ripe with buoyant personality, this pretty white makes an incredibly clean and polished first impression. There's bright crispness with lemon zest, mineral notes, cut grass and white spring flower. Imported by Selected Estates of Europe Ltd. —M.L.

86 Villa Medici 2008 Custoza Superiore; \$NA. Ripe fruit aromas of peach and honeydew emerge from this nose of this luminous, golden Bianco di Custoza. The wine makes a big impact on the palate thanks to its creamy consistency and the ripeness of its yellow fruit flavors. Pair it with shrimp in spicy sauce or crustaceans. —M.L.

85 Cantina di Custoza 2009 Custoza; \$NA. Bright notes of cut grass, dried herb and drying mineral come to the forefront of this cheerful Custoza. The wine is light and luminous and hits the palate in a direct, refreshing manner. It would make an excellent companion to Thai spring rolls or fried vegetable tempura. Imported by Vias Imports. —M.L.

85 Villa Medici 2009 Custoza; \$NA. Drying mineral tones are backed by cheerful notes of citrus and grapefruit. You'll feel mature fruit flavors and medium density in the mouth. This is an upfront, easy wine with smooth flavors that would work with seafood, rice salad or fresh summer vegetable dishes. —M.L.

TREBBIANO D'ABRUZZO

91 Masciarelli 2006 Marina Cvetič (Trebbiano d'Abruzzo); \$60. This thick, luscious and opulent Trebbiano d'Abruzzo shows the best of white wine making in central Italy. There's complexity and balance here all backed by beautifully intense aromas of stone fruit, toasted almond and exotic fruit. Imported by Masciarelli Wine Co. —M.L.

90 Masciarelli 2006 Castello di Semivicoli (Trebiano d'Abruzzo); \$45.

Castello di Semivicoli is a thick and succulent expression of Trebiano that offers impressive intensity and persistency. Aromas here include honey, acacia flower, stone fruit, apricot and mature melon. There's also a touch of roasted almond for extra complexity. Imported by Masciarelli Wine Co. —M.L.

89 Perticaia 2008 Trebiano (Umbria); \$NA.

Perticaia delivers a gorgeous Trebiano with rich creaminess to its texture and compelling aromas of passion fruit, melon, yellow rose and pulpy stone fruit. You could pair this beautiful wine with shellfish or crab cakes. Imported by Verdoni Imports. —M.L.

87 Talamonti 2008 Aternum (Trebiano d'Abruzzo); \$16.

This pretty Trebiano offers aromas of peach, candied fruit and apricot. There's a freshness to the aromas that translates into crisp and snappy zest in the mouth. Drink this generous wine with seafood or white meat. Imported by Panebianco. —M.L.

85 Carlo Mario Margiotta 2007 Cre-tara (Trebiano d'Abruzzo); \$NA.

Loads of butterscotch, pastry cream and caramel appear on the nose of this luminous Trebiano d'Abruzzo. There are some ripe fruit notes of melon and apricot as well. Imported by R&R Wine Imports Inc. —M.L.

85 Talamonti 2009 Trebi (Trebiano d'Abruzzo); \$10.

Light and refreshing, with grassy notes and kiwi aromas, this well-priced Trebiano makes an excellent choice with cocktails or fresh summer foods like Caprese salad or grilled tuna. Imported by Panebianco. **Best Buy.** —M.L.

85 Talamonti 2008 Trebi (Trebiano d'Abruzzo); \$10.

Trebi has a fresh and luminous personality backed by aromas of white stone, citrus and peach. There's a touch of green fruit or kiwi as well that gives it a zesty, crisp feel on the close. Imported by Panebianco. **Best Buy.** —M.L.

85 Valori 2008 Trebiano d'Abruzzo; \$10.

Valori is a line of fresh and affordable wines. This easy expression of Trebiano offers aromas of stone fruit and cut grass. It's a great wine to pair with light summer foods. Imported by Masciarelli Wine Co. —M.L.

FALANGHINA

87 Mastroberardino 2008 Falanghina (Sannio); \$20.

Falanghina is a bright and tonic white wine and this expression from the Sannio appellation in southern Italy is no exception. The wine is driven by drying mineral tones as well as fresh aromas of apple and pear. Imported by Winebow. —M.L.

86 Mastroberardino 2008 Morabianca Falanghina (Irpinia); \$NA.

Light, fresh and perfect with appetizers or salads, Falanghina is one of the favorite easy-drinking white grapes of Southern Italy. Aromas here include white stone, lime and cantaloupe. Imported by Winebow. —M.L.

86 Ocone 2008 Falanghina (Taburno); \$NA.

Made from organically-grown grapes, this is one of the most aromatically sophisticated expressions of Falanghina you will find. This wine boasts a saturated golden hue and aromas of ripe fruit, peach, citrus blossom and drying mineral are more complex than expected. Imported by Scoperta Importing Co. Inc. —M.L.

FIANO

90 Mastroberardino 2008 Radici (Fiano di Avellino); \$30.

A beautiful white wine that shows so much territorial personality. You can taste the drying mineral tones gained from the volcanic soils and the ripe fruit and pear aromas from sunny climatic conditions. Imported by Winebow. —M.L.

87 Cantele 2009 Alticelli Fiano (Salento); \$NA.

This is a delightfully easy and fresh white wine. Like most expressions of this promising variety, this wine shoes mineral characteristics backed by citrus, peach and pear. Imported by Vias Imports. —M.L.

83 Rocca del Principe 2008 Fiano di Avellino; \$20.

There's a slightly awkward note of carbon or smoke that blows off soon enough. This shows medium consistency with a fresh finish that is driven by pear and peach flavors. Imported by Indigenous Selections. —M.L.

PALLAGRELLO

88 Terre del Principe 2009 Le Sèrole (Terre del Volturno); \$50.

This expression shows a golden color with a slight amber hue followed by aromas of stone fruit, honeydew and white flower. There's good density and texture in the mouth followed by piquant spice. It's more structured and sophisticated than you'd expect. Imported by Vias Imports. —M.L.

88 Terre del Principe 2009 Fontanavigna (Terre del Volturno); \$39.

This is a very beautiful wine with aromatic intensity and fresh, crisp acidity. The wine is satisfying on all levels: It drinks easily and would pair with fish, crustaceans or vegetables. Very promising. Imported by Vias Imports. —M.L.

87 Fattoria Selvanova 2006 Acquavigna (Terre del Volturno); \$19.

From the almost-extinct Pallagrello grape, this luminous white wine really holds its own in terms of personality and uniqueness. There are pretty mineral tones here but thanks to the wine's age (from the 2006 vintage), you'll also get more complex notes of butterscotch, caramel and apricot. You can feel the high alcohol on the close. Imported by David Vincent Selection. —M.L.

PECORINO

90 Ciavolich Giuseppe 2008 Colline Pescaresi; \$24.

This is a very special wine from central Italy made with Pecorino grapes (a variety that is currently experiencing and happy revival). The wine opens with a golden-amber color and offers spicy aromas of pastry cream, vanilla, spice, exotic fruit, honey and apricot. It's a big, structured white wine to pair with pork or veal. Imported by Clyde Thomas. —M.L.

87 Cantina Tollo 2008 Terre di Chieti; \$28.

Pecorino is a naturally structured and intense white wine that delivers aromas of pear, peach and butterscotch. In the mouth this native variety offers smooth, silky richness and long lasting density. Imported by Enotec Imports, Inc. —M.L.

87 La Valentina 2008 Colline Pescaresi; \$15.

The Pecorino grape is one of the hottest native varieties to emerge from

Italy. Quality minded producer La Valentina presents a beautiful, structured expression with intense aromas of melon, apricot, butterscotch and yellow candy. Imported by Dalla Terra Winery Direct. —M.L.

VERMENTINO

87 Pala 2009 Stellato (Vermentino di Sardegna); \$NA. A luminous and expressive interpretation of Vermentino that boasts Mediterranean accents of dried sage, basil, white mineral, citrus and stone fruit. This is the quintessential wine to pair with grilled fish. Imported by Banville & Jones Wine Merchants. —M.L.

85 Pala 2009 I Fiori (Vermentino di Sardegna); \$NA. Fresh and fragrant, offering layers of cut grass, dried herbs, citrus and passion fruit. It's an easy, no-fuss wine with a crisp finish that would pair with fried calamari. Imported by Banville & Jones Wine Merchants. —M.L.

85 Santa Maria La Palma 2008 Aragosta (Vermentino di Sardegna); \$12. Aromas of pine and dried herbs emerge from the nose of this light and luminous Vermentino from Sardinia. The wine also boasts fruit nuances of citrus, peach and green fruit. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd. —M.L.

84 Barberani 2008 Vermentino (Umbria); \$NA. This Vermentino opens with ripe peach aromas with citrus and even a playful hint of green lime. But power and a slightly alcoholic aftertaste are what appear on the close. Imported by Vinifera Imports. —M.L.

OTHER WHITE WINES

90 Umani Ronchi 2007 Casal di Serra Vecchie Vigne (Verdicchio dei Castelli di Jesi Classico Superiore); \$28. Made with 40-year-old Verdicchio vines, this beautiful white shows the best of Marche wine-making. It's a thick, creamy wine with peach, apricot, almond, vanilla and pastry cream aromas. Pair it with duck or Cornish game hen. Imported by Bedford International. —M.L.

89 Casale del Giglio 2008 Antinoo (Lazio); \$24. A gorgeous blend of Chardonnay and fragrant Viognier that shows the structure and creaminess of the first grape and the floral, fruity intensity of the second. The wine is crisp, clean and would pair with basil pesto. Imported by Soilair Selection. —M.L.

88 Mastroberardino 2008 Nova Serra (Greco di Tufo); \$30. Nova Serra opens with a luminous color accented by golden highlights followed by aromas of melon, peach and Golden Delicious apple. The wine is silky and creamy on the close, and those qualities make it a good partner to shellfish or risotto. Imported by Winebow. —M.L.

87 Casale del Giglio 2009 Petit Manseng (Lazio); \$24. Casale del Giglio, from the Lazio region in central Italy, exports what may well be Italy's only 100% expression of Petit Manseng. The wine is fragrant and ripe with pretty tones of peach blossom, jasmine and honeysuckle. Imported by Soilair Selection. —M.L.

87 Conti Zecca 2008 Cantalupi Chardonnay (Salice Salentino); \$NA. This Chardonnay does a really nice job of expressing the natural creaminess of the variety and the mature fruit and peach notes associated with the sun-drenched territory that shaped it. The wine is smooth, creamy and dense in the mouth. Imported by Mionetto USA. —M.L.

87 Il Conte 2008 Villa Prandone Cavaceppo (Marche); \$14. Here's a lovely white wine from Central Italy that you should definitely try. Naturally creamy and rich, this luminous white delivers aromas of stone fruit, melon and yellow rose. Imported by Masciarelli Wine Co. —M.L.

87 Lungarotti 2009 Torre di Giano (Torgiano); \$15. This is a delightful blend of Trebbiano and Grechetto that offers a crisp, clean and refreshing experience overall. Aromas of citrus, kiwi and stone fruit would pair with light summery foods and salads. Imported by Vin Divino. —M.L.

87 Mastroberardino 2008 Coda di Volpe (Lacryma Christi del Vesuvio); \$20. Lacryma Christi (made from native Coda di Volpe grapes) is a special wine. It doesn't give much at first, but as time passes in the glass,

the wine delivers mineral tones, citrus and stone fruit. It's a great match to seafood. Imported by Winebow. —M.L.

87 Tenuta di Pietra Porzia 2008 Frascati Superiore; \$14. A blend of Malvasia and Trebbiano, this luminous, golden wine shows fragrant aromas of honeysuckle, white melon, peach blossom and almond. Imported by Vias Imports. —M.L.

86 Bigi 2009 White Blend (Est! Est!! Est!!!); \$12. Est! Est!! Est!!! takes its name from an ancient legend in which a bishop desired some good wine on his travels to Rome. In Montefiascone, his servant found wine so good he wrote Est ("It is") three times to alert his master. This blend of white grapes is light, informal and very welcoming. Imported by Opici Wines. —M.L.

86 Bigi 2009 Vipra Bianca (Umbria); \$13. Here's a fresh and easy-going blend of Grechetto and Chardonnay from Umbria that offers just the right level of freshness and intensity you need for a successful pairing with shrimp and avocado salad or fried crab cakes. Imported by Opici Wines. —M.L.

86 Bosco del Merlo 2008 Turranio Sauvignon (Lison-Pramaggiore); \$NA. Here's a very attractive Sauvignon with clean aromas and a perky disposition. You can drink this wine with light vegetable dishes or raw fish and it will keep your palate fresh. Imported by New England Wine and Spirits inc. —M.L.

86 Cantele 2009 Chardonnay (Salento); \$NA. A crisp and simple Chardonnay with bright notes of citrus and passion fruits, lime and green fruit. The wine is simple and light on the palate with a refreshing, zesty feel overall. Imported by Vias Imports. —M.L.

86 Cantina Cinque Terre 2008 Liguria; \$25. Here's a rare and exciting blend of Bosco, Albarola and Vermentino from a cooperative winery in the beautiful Cinque Terre region of northern Italy. You won't find these native grapes anywhere else and the wine is perfectly suited to the fresh fish dishes served in this gorgeous part of the world. Imported by Biagio Cru & Estate Wines, LLC. —M.L.

86 Conti Leopardi di San Leopardo 2008 Valdicia (Marche); \$15. This

BUYING | GUIDE

blend of Verdicchio, Chardonnay and Trebbiano offers bright crispness and pretty flavors of peach, citrus and cantaloupe. This easygoing white plays its best cards in the mouth and would pair with shrimp cocktail or scallops. Imported by Monarchia Matt International. —M.L.

86 L'Astore Masseria 2008 Krita (Salento); \$15. A luminous blend of Chardonnay and Malvasia Bianca with pretty aromas of white stone, candied fruit and loads of peach. There's good density and natural consistency here yet the ultimate endnote is fresh and clean. Imported by US Wine Imports. —M.L.

85 Conti Zecca 2007 Luna (Salento); \$NA. From the beautiful Salento region comes this warm-climate, slightly aged blend of Chardonnay and Malvasia Bianca. The color is rich and saturated and so are the aromas of mature apricot, passion fruit and almond. It's a big, chewy wine with loads of intensity. Imported by MW Imports. —M.L.

85 Il Conte 2008 Villa Prandone Aurato (Falerio dei Colli Ascolani); \$9. This interesting blend of Trebbiano, Passerina and Pecorino offers fragrant pulses of peach, yellow fruit and honeysuckle with light shadings of crushed mineral and dried herbs. The wine is compact, simple and fresh on the close. Imported by Masciarelli Wine Co. **Best Buy.** —M.L.

85 Pala 2009 I Fiori (Nuragus di Cagliari); \$NA. I Fiori epitomizes one of those crisp, clean and refreshing white Italian wines that beg a pairing with sushi, smoked salmon and crushed coriander or swordfish carpaccio. There's a drying mineral note backed by aromas of dried flowers. Imported by Banville & Jones Wine Merchants. —M.L.

85 Tenuta di Pietra Porzia 2008 Saula Carta Nera (Frascati Superiore); \$15. A rich and golden-colored Frascati Superiore with intense aromas of orange zest, ginger, graham cracker and butterscotch. There are oxidized notes here but the wine is rich and succulent in the mouth. Imported by Saranty Imports. —M.L.

85 Viticoltori in Avio 2006 Terra dei Forti Enantio (Valdadige); \$NA. Enantio is a little-known indigenous grape of northern Italy and this is a rare, 100% expression of the variety. The nose here is subdued and

clean with shadings of ripe cherry, spice and leather. The wine shows a touch of bitterness on the close and fresh acidity is reigned in by the wine's soft, polished finish. —M.L.

84 Bonotto delle Tezze 2009 Tai (Veneto); \$10. Tai is an indigenous grape found in northern Italy that offers sweet aromas of honeysuckle, orange blossom, butterscotch and caramel. It leaves a strong aromatic mark on the palate and should be paired with foods cooked with herbs or basil. Imported by Myssura Trading. —M.L.

84 Ippolito 1845 2007 Res Dei Greco Bianco (Cirò); \$18. This expression of Greco from Calabria offers a compact, light-weight feel with easy aromas of stone fruit and white mineral. It's a fresh, clean and simple wine. Imported by Zancanella Importing Co. —M.L.

84 Ocone 2008 Coda di Volpe (Taburno); \$NA. Candy-like notes of butterscotch and caramel open the nose and are followed by mature notes of stone fruit and apricot. There's a mineral- and saccharine-like quality and the wine is fresh, light and crisp in the mouth. Imported by Scoperta Importing Co. Inc. —M.L.

84 Terrazzo 2008 Marche; \$9. An informal 80-20 blend of Verdicchio and Trebbiano, this luminous white offers fresh tones of lemon zest, pulpy stone fruit and mature kiwi. It's a great wine for washing down summertime picnic foods. Imported by Monarchia Matt International. —M.L.

Spirits

A WIDE WORLD OF INTERNATIONAL WHISKIES

It's a big world out there, and we've got the whiskies to prove it. For this month's column, whiskies came in from Ireland, Wales, France, Japan, Canada and various corners of the United States. They spanned all styles—single malt, blended, peated, cask-finished—as well as all ages, mash bills (the blend of grains used to make the spirit) and colors, from crystal clear to deep nut-brown.

It's an amazing testament that so many countries have opted to distill whiskey (or whisky, as it's referred to in Canada, Japan and Scotland). Originally, whiskey was crafted in countries that lacked the warm climate for producing fermented drinks made from grapes. However, this is no longer an iron-clad rule. In fact, some distillers in California

and other states now produce brandies and whiskies in the same facility.

A brief word about what's not represented in the reviews below: Scotch whiskies, which will be covered in depth separately, and U.S. Bourbon and Rye whiskies, since both categories were covered in recent months.

So what's the best way to consume whiskey? Although a number of whiskey-based cocktails exist—the Whiskey Sour, Manhattan, Rob Roy and Rusty Nail, to name just a few classics—whiskey is arguably the trickiest base ingredient to use in cocktails. Perhaps that's why many purists opt to drink whiskey straight, either neat, with ice or with just a splash of water to help coax out flavors.

—Kara Newman

96 Gentleman Jack Rare Tennessee Whiskey (USA; Jack Daniels Distillery, Lynchburg, TN); 40% abv, \$30. This honey-colored whiskey is mellow, smooth, mouthwatering and delicious. Rich and pretty caramel and citrus aromas precede complex flavors of leather, tobacco, vanilla and cocoa. Its long finish displays lots of caramel, spicy cinnamon and ginger. Pair with a cigar.

95 Slieve Foy 8 year old Irish Single Malt Whiskey (Ireland; Preiss Imports, San Diego, CA); 46% abv, \$45. This was a pleasant surprise: soft, fresh, delicate and lovely. It has a light straw color and is perfumed with pineapples and tropical fruit. The slightly fruity flavor finishes with a wispy smokiness, and lingers on.

94 Jack Daniel's Single Barrel Select Tennessee Whiskey, (USA; Jack Daniels Distillery, Lynchburg, TN); 47% abv, \$40. At first, this whiskey is easy to underestimate, since the amber color and mild toffee aroma give little away. But one sip, and it is clear this whiskey means business: Deep vanilla cookie and cigar tobacco flavors unfold to a big, burnt-caramel finish, which washes over the palate like a rolling wave. Manhattan-worthy.

93 Armorik Whiskey (Brittany, France; Preiss Imports, San Diego, CA); 46% abv, \$55. A single malt with a

golden color and scent of apple, oak and vanilla. A light, citrusy flavor finishes with a smoky, peaty note. Medium feel.

93 Bernheim Original Kentucky Straight Wheat Whiskey (USA; Heaven Hill Distilleries, Bardstown, KY); 45% abv, \$30. This small-batch whiskey, with its bright copper penny color and bewitchingly sweet aromas of cocoa, mocha and fresh-baked cookies, is one of the few “straight wheat” whiskeys out there. The flavors are brisk and restrained, with leather and tobacco tones and a clean citrus and vanilla finish. Despite a relatively high proof, it still comes across as mellow and balanced. Drink straight up, with ice.

93 Canadian Club Sherry Cask Whisky (Canada; Canadian Club Import Company, Deerfield, IL); 40% abv, \$26. Aged eight years, then finished in Spanish Sherry casks. The final product is mellow, silky and refined. While the Sherry influence isn't overt, the extra cask aging shows in the deep nut-brown color and warm flavors of dark chocolate, Guinness stout and hazelnuts, which fade into a long, intriguing finish. Pair with a sweet and sticky dessert.

93 Canadian Mist Black Diamond Premium Select Whisky (Canada; Brown-Forman Beverages, Louisville, KY); 43% abv, \$16. This leather club chair of a whisky has a nut-brown color and a part

vanilla aroma. The flavor is all on the finish: complex, rich, lingering notes of cocoa, coffee and leather, balanced with the right amount of bite. Good value.

93 Charbay Hop-Flavored Whiskey (USA; Charbay Winery & Distillery, St. Helena, CA); 55% abv; \$325. This whiskey reads like a cross between Bourbon and a fine Cognac, delivering rich aromas of caramel, espresso and crème brûlée. Although initially brisk and spicy, the flavor fades to a long burnt-toffee finish and bracing bite. Feels warm and soft on the tongue.

93 John L. Sullivan Irish Whiskey (Ireland; Undisputed International LLC, Washington, DC); 40% abv, \$24. This Bourbon-barrel-finished whiskey is a treat, with a light amber color, caramel and orange peel aroma, and a lingering caramel and spice finish. Soft, smooth and full-bodied.

92 Connemara Peated Single Malt Irish Whiskey (Ireland; Sazerac Company, New Orleans, LA); 40% abv, \$43. Smoke bomb alert! Imbibers who love a peaty profile will enjoy this smoky-but-smooth single malt. Pair with assertive flavors, like sausages or charcuterie.

92 Hibiki Aged 12 Years Whisky (Japan; Suntory International Corp., New York, NY); 43% abv, \$65. With a little water, this golden blended whisky opens up to delicate, nuanced honey and floral aromas and flavors. Finishes smoky, dry and brisk.

92 Kilbeggan Irish Whiskey (Ireland; Sazerac Company, New Orleans, LA); 40% abv, \$20. Golden honey color. The aroma is a pleasing mix of caramel and faint smoke. Bold, oaky flavors, rich feel and beautiful, lingering butterscotch finish with a faint whisper of smoke and just the right amount of bite. Sip over ice.

92 Stranahan's Colorado Whiskey (USA; Stranahan's Colorado Whiskey, Denver, CO); 47% abv, \$59. This 100% malted barley spent two years in new charred oak and boasts an amber color, sweet caramel scent with a touch of coconut and juicy apple, and relatively dry flavors. What sets this whiskey apart is the remarkable deep cocoa and pronounced coffee finish and vel-

vety, creamy mouthfeel, reminiscent of ice cream and root beer foam. An alcohol sting cuts through, but should temper over ice nicely.

91 Caribou Crossing Single Barrel Canadian Whisky (Canada; Sazerac Company, New Orleans, LA); 40% abv, \$50. A smooth and enjoyable caramel bomb, from the pretty scent straight through to the lingering finish. Sippable over ice.

91 Jameson Irish Whiskey (Ireland; John Jameson Import Company, Purchase, NY); 40% abv, \$25. Golden color, apple and oak aromas and a medium feel. Finishes full and oaky, with faint butterscotch and smoky notes and an alcoholic bite.

91 The Yamazaki Single Malt Whisky (Japan; Suntory International Corp., New York, NY); 43% abv, \$45. Apple and pear aromas, and delicate floral and fruity flavors. This Japanese whisky finishes smoky, elegant and restrained.

90 Classic 12 by Canadian Club (Canada; Canadian Club Import Company, Deerfield, IL); 40% abv, \$22. This honey-colored spirit is packaged inside an impressive bottle with wide shoulders and a cut-glass base. The whisky has virtually no aroma, which seems like a missed opportunity given the array of flavors: a sweet dark-chocolate note segues into a mellow finish of honey, oranges, cinnamon and clove. Ends with a tongue-coating finish.

90 Danny Boy Premium Irish Whiskey (Ireland; Total Beverage Solution, Mt. Pleasant, SC); 40% abv, \$22. Golden color, vanilla and slightly smoky scent. The taste is smoky but not overpowering.

90 Hirsch Selection Canadian Rye (Canada; Preiss Imports, San Diego, CA) 43% abv, \$55. This 20-year-old Canadian rye retains a light touch. Golden color and soft citrusy scent with a hint of vanilla. Flavors are light and honey-like, with a floral and vanilla finish, and that signature rye bite.

90 Red Stag by Jim Beam (USA; James B. Beam Distilling Co., Frankfort, KY); 40% abv, \$18. Who says all whiskey needs to be so serious? This black

cherry-infused Bourbon is just plain fun. Look for strawberry jam fragrance and a big, raucous, sticky, supersweet vanilla and cherry soda flavor. It has a syrupy, viscous feel, but just enough whiskey bite to be drinkable straight up, or mixed with ginger ale.

90 Royal Canadian Small Batch Canadian Whisky (Canada; Sazerac Company, Frankfort, KY); 40% abv, \$30. The quiet dignity of the bottle reflects the dark amber liquid inside. Give this one some time to open up, and the reward is a restrained coffee, tobacco and oak profile with a long caramel finish.

89 Connemara 12-year-old Peated Single Malt Irish Whiskey (Ireland; Sazerac Company, New Orleans, LA); 40% abv, \$94. A rugged, undeniably peaty whiskey, with lots of smoke offset by undertones of vanilla and faint butterscotch.

89 Jack Daniels Old No. 7 Black Label Tennessee Whiskey (USA; Jack Daniels Distillery, Lynchburg TN); 40% abv, \$18. Familiar maple syrup color and vanilla and oak flavor, good dose of alcohol burn. Finishes relatively dry, with some vanilla and caramel. Jack and Coke is the classic combo.

89 The Tyrconnell Single Malt Irish Whiskey (Ireland; Sazerac Company, New Orleans, LA); 40% abv, \$35. Light gold color and sweet, juicy fragrance of apples, pears, and honey. Despite a soft feel at first, this whiskey shows a smoky rawness and alcohol bite.

89 WhipperSnapper Oregon Spirit Whiskey (USA; Ransom Spirits Co., Sheridan, OR); 42% abv, \$30. Light amber hue, pungent anise notes on the nose and tongue. With time, the flavor opens up to more cereal-like and oaky tones, finishing with an invigorating hit of cinnamon. A real live-wire of a whiskey.

88 Canadian Club Reserve Aged 10 Years (Canada; Canadian Club Import Company, Deerfield, IL); 40% abv, \$17. Amber color, not much aroma. Soft feel, well-structured. One-dimensional flavor but nice finish: nutty, crème brûlée, vanilla.

88 Glen Breton Rare (Canada; Preiss Imports, San Diego, CA); 43% abv, \$95. A 10-year-old single malt whisky modeled on Highland Scotch. The influence shows in the fruity, honeyed scent, with just a hint of smoke to tickle the nose. The flavors are almond-like, with pleasing touches of peat and cocoa, though it finishes oddly yeasty and beer-like. This whiskey would do well balanced with sweetness, as in a whiskey sour.

87 Hirsch Selection 20 Year Old American Whiskey (Preiss Imports, San Diego, CA); 48% abv, \$80. Light amber in color, with warm, heady butterscotch and cookie dough fragrances; too bad the taste doesn't mirror the scent. Instead, there's a flash of sweetness on the tongue and a nice vanilla finish, but it is all quickly overwhelmed by alcohol. Even cut with water, the spirit is just too darn hot.

86 Penderyn Single Malt Welsh Whiskey (Wales; Sazerac Company, New Orleans, LA); 46% abv, \$70. At first glance, it's easy to mistake this whiskey for wine, thanks to the bottle shape and design and the light amber liquid within. Though finished in Madeira casks, it is unmistakably whiskey. The rich, faintly caramel scent hints at Madeira, but unfortunately it's not apparent in the flavor, which tends more toward oak and anise.

85 Canadian Mist Blended Canadian Whisky (Canada; Brown-Forman, Louisville, KY). 40% abv, \$12. Amber in color, with a resinous, nutty scent. Despite oaky flavor and a thin feel, there's a very nice vanilla finish. Alcohol bite. Mix it in a cocktail and feel no guilt about it.

83 Hirsch Selection American Corn Whiskey (Preiss Imports, San Diego, CA); 45% abv, \$30. It's hard to believe that a spirit aged over four years has such a pale straw color and mild aroma. There's a strong whiff of alcohol, with slightly apple- and plastic-like aromas. Light feel.

**THE WINE ENTHUSIAST
SPIRITS BUYING GUIDE**

The Spirits Buying Guide is a summary of recent detailed evaluations and product ratings of a single reviewer, Spirits Reviewer Kara Newman. Every tasting note is accompanied by a rating. Also noted are the full name of the product, its alcoholic strength expressed as percent alcohol by volume, the producer's name, and the suggested U.S. retail price. If the price cannot be confirmed, an \$NA (not available) will be printed. Prices are for 750-ml bottle unless otherwise indicated.

TASTING METHODOLOGY AND GOALS

Tastings are conducted individually in a controlled tasting environment. Spirits are tasted alone; no formal reviews are ever conducted in the presence of any producer or industry representative. Samples are tasted blind in flights of no more than six to eight products. Price is not a factor in the evaluation.

ABOUT THE SCORES

Beyond the rating, we encourage you to read the accompanying tasting note to learn about each spirit's special characteristics. The numerical ratings correspond to quality in the following manner:

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- Excellent 90–93:** Highly recommended.
- Very Good 87–89:** Often good value; well recommended.
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Spirits receiving a rating below 80 are not reviewed.

Certain spirits are designated as **Best Buys**. Spirits earning this designation offer a high level of quality in relation to price. There are no specific guidelines or formulae for determining Best Buys.

SUBMITTING SPIRITS FOR REVIEW

Spirits should be submitted to the following reviewing location: Kara Newman c/o 36 West 20th St, 3rd Floor, New York, NY, 10011. Inquiries should be addressed to Spirits Reviewer Kara Newman at spirits@WineEnthusiast.net. **There is no charge for submitting spirits**, and *Wine Enthusiast* will make every effort to sample all spirits submitted for review. There is, however, no guarantee that all submissions will be tasted, or that reviews will appear in the magazine. All submissions must be accompanied by a submission form, which may be downloaded from our website. Please be sure to check the spirits tasting schedule prior to submitting samples.

LABELS

Labels are paid promotions. Producers and their representatives are given the opportunity to submit labels, which are reproduced and printed along with tasting notes and scores. For information on label purchases, contact Denise Valenza by phone at 813.571.1122; by fax at 866.896.8786; or email dvalenza@wineenthusiast.net.

Find all reviews on our fully searchable database at buyingguide.winemag.com

Beer

FROM BELGIUM, WITH LOVE

Generally, when people start to become interested in the world of great beer, they start with the brews of a country known for its rich beer heritage and reputation for outstanding quality: Belgium. The most popular intro into Belgian style beers is witbiers, but from there people move on to other styles, from Belgian pale ales to saisons, bière bruts to lambics. The options are many and the results are almost always tasty.

There's no denying the influence that these historic beers have had on the brewing world. From superb traditional offerings to domestic interpretations with a unique twist, there's something for everyone available today. Belgian-style dark strong ales are big and bold, essentially the brute bullies of the beer world. Traditionally bottle-conditioned, they are complex, rich and malty with significant esters, spicy phenols and low to moderate bitterness. Alcohol typically ranges from 8–11% abv, though they can go as high as 15%, making easy-

drinking examples a bit dangerous. Given their density, weight and structure, they are usually excellent cellar candidates for aging.

Dubbels are also rich and malty, but exhibit less fruitiness and alcoholic strength than their dark strong ale cousins. Tripels are known for their well-masked strength (traditional average abv between 7.5–9.5%) and complex spice profile. They're also usually very dry and bottle-conditioned (or refermented in the bottle). Quadrupels (or Quads, for short) are even bigger and bolder than their Dubbel and Tripel sibling styles, a true dark strong ale indeed. Full bodied and mildly bitter, they are intense selections with assertive rich malty sweetness and noticeable alcohol.

With all of the choices available and the improved distribution of both imported and domestic bottles, there's never been a better time to start your Belgian-inspired beer education.

Prost! —Lauren Buzzeo

97 La Fin du Monde (Tripel; Unibroue, Canada); 9.0% abv, \$10/750 ml. Golden in color with a glowing orange vibrancy throughout, topped by a stunning off-white head that lingers but leaves a sticky lacing behind when it finally subsides. The aromas jump right out of the glass: ripe nectarine, fresh apricot and juicy citrus flecked with clove and peppery spice. The mouth is lively but smooth and creamy, with a great effervescence to keep things peppy. Flavors of biscuit malts, banana, hard pear and more sweet lemony citrus follow in the mouth. The finish is crisp and clean, leaving you perfectly primed for more.

96 Trappistes Rochefort 10 (Quadrupel; Brasserie de Rochefort, Belgium); 11.3% abv, \$7/330 ml. One of Rochefort's three offerings, all numerically named (6, 8, and 10) after their "Belgian degrees," a traditional means of measuring gravity (or the sweetness of the wort before fermentation) and determining the final strength of the beer. This is by far their strongest offering in terms of overall intensity and alcoholic strength. Sweet malt and bready yeast dominate the nose and mouth alongside notes of prune, fig and brandied pear laced with sweet cigar spice and a chocolate dusting.

Full bodied and quite heavy on the palate with the alcohol present throughout, but the assertive profile has all of the components to make this a beer that will age beautifully and mellow with time.

94 Allagash Tripel Reserve Belgian Style Ale (Tripel; Allagash Brewing, ME); 9.0% abv, \$9/750 ml. Known for producing superb Belgian-style beers, it's no surprise that Allagash's Tripel Reserve is as good as it is. A hazy golden-yellow color in the glass with a billowy white head that shows good retention. Quite intense scents of candi sugar (Belgian brewing sugar), soft green apple, pepper and sweet spice esters typical of Belgian yeast start off on the nose and then transition to the mouth alongside additional flavors of sweet pithy citrus and raw dough. The hops appear on the midpalate and linger through the dry finish, lifting any perceived sugary sweetness. Warming and full but surprisingly mouthwatering.

93 Ommegang Abbey Ale (Dubbel; Brewery Ommegang, NY); 8.5% abv, \$8/750 ml. Moderately carbonated with a full, sweet body, this is a classic brew that has retained its reputation throughout the years as an approachable and enjoyable Bel-

gian-style domestic beer. The Belgian yeast aromas of clove, banana and biscuit conquer the nose, with suggestions of cherry pit, candied date and caramelized malt fighting for recognition. Complex and malty in the mouth with a dry, somewhat nutty finish. A very drinkable but also quite strong beer.

92 **Lost Abbey 10 Commandments Naturally Flavored Ale (Belgian Dark Strong Ale; Port Brewing, CA); 10.0% abv, \$12/750 ml.** The bottle reads, “Ale brewed with honey, raisins and rosemary” and you can definitely pick up on all three throughout the nose and mouth along with accents of caramel sauce and spicy stewed whole plums. Dark fruit initially floods the mouth, while notes of dried herbs and honey-suckle unfold after swallow. Full bodied and robust but softly carbonated, leading into a long and flavorful finish laced with roasted ground cocoa nibs and a touch of sweet smoke.

90 **Lost Abbey Judgement Day Ale (Quadrupel; Port Brewing, CA); 10.5% abv, \$9/750 ml.** The label indicates that this is an “Ale Brewed with Raisins” and you can certainly tell: rum-soaked raisin flavors abound. Looking past that, vinous nuances of dark plum and berries fight for recognition alongside hints of brown sugar, toffee, dried dates and sweet spice. The mouth is hot and medium-weight, with a seriously sweet and slick body that’s looking to be lifted by a bit more carbonation than what’s provided. Good drinkability but the raisins conquer a little too much of this brew’s overall character.

89 **Smuttynose Big Beer Series Gravitation (Quadrupel; Smuttynose Brewing, NH); 12.0% abv, \$7/22 oz.** A Belgian-style quadrupel ale, this is the latest offering in the Smuttynose Big Beer Series. Brewed with 200 pounds of raisin purée per batch in addition to Belgian specialty malts and yeast, this is a rich mahogany-colored beer with a seriously intense profile that stands out from more traditionally-styled Quads. Plum, caramel and a boozy warmth mingle with the assertive raisin aromas. The mouthfeel is thick and viscous but has a slight chewiness to it, with sweet flavors of toffee, stewed raisin and burnt sugar fighting through the alcoholic bite.

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SUBMITTING BEERS FOR REVIEW

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