



**WINE ENTHUSIAST**  
MAGAZINE

# BUYING GUIDE DECEMBER 15/2011

MAKE YOUR HOLIDAYS SPARKLE  
WITH A GLASS OF DELICIOUS  
**CALIFORNIA BUBBLY.**

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## CALIFORNIA

### SPARKLERS OF THE GOLDEN STATE

**W**ith corks popping across the nation during this holiday season, celebrants can look to California's wide range of sparklers—not just for toasts, mind you, but for pleasurable drinking throughout the night, especially with food.

California's tier of sparkling wines is dominated by Schramsberg, Iron Horse and Roederer Estate, followed, often closely, by Gloria Ferrer, Laetitia, Domaine Carneros, J Vineyards & Winery, Chandon and Mumm Napa. This top tier rests on a huge base of affordable, value-oriented bubbly produced by such brands as E&J Gallo's Barefoot and Korbel.

The best sparkling wines in California come from grapes grown in cooler areas, as is the case in France. Where Champagne is chilly be-

cause it's so far north, in California, cooler climate increases with proximity to the Pacific Ocean. Hence, the better vineyards are within 30 miles of the coast. The main varieties, as in France, are Pinot Noir and Chardonnay, with sometimes a little Pinot Meunier blended in.

A great California sparkling wine approaches great French Champagne in every respect. Producers have worked long and hard over the years, both in the vineyard and in the winery, to boost quality, with evident results. Consumers have never had more choices in California bubbly, at a better range of prices.

This month's Buying Guide includes great wines from France's Rhône Valley, Italy, Washington State and elsewhere. Enjoy, and happy new year!  
—STEVE HEIMOFF

## CALIFORNIA

### SPARKLING WINE

**97 Iron Horse 1997 Joy! Blanc de Blancs (Green Valley).** For full review see page 3.  
abv: 13% Price: \$179/1.5 L

**96 Roederer Estate 2003 L'Ermitage (Anderson Valley).** 2003 was a great vintage for Roederer Estate. This, their top vintage wine, is very great, and the price is an absolute steal for this worldclass sparkler. It's enormously rich in the strawberries from Pinot Noir and the limes from Chardonnay, while the toast and rich lees combine for a perfect Champagne-style smokiness. And so smooth, it's like a kiss of silk. At the age of eight years, this wonderful wine is just getting started. *Editors' Choice.* —S.H.  
abv: 12.1% Price: \$45

**95 Gloria Ferrer 2000 Carneros Cuvée (Carneros).** For full review see page 3.  
abv: 12.5% Price: \$50

**93 Iron Horse 2003 Brut LD (Green Valley).** For full review see page 4.  
abv: 13.5% Price: \$85

**92 Iron Horse 2006 Brut Rosé (Green Valley).** For full review see page 5.  
abv: 13.5% Price: \$50

**92 Roederer Estate NV Brut Rosé (Anderson Valley).** Great price for a sparkling wine this refined, and the fact that it's a rosé makes it an even better deal. It's rich in strawberry, orange and lime flavors, with that savory yeastiness that marks the best bubbly. The blend is Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. *Editors' Choice.* —S.H.  
abv: 12% Price: \$27

**92 Scharffenberger NV Brut Rosé (Mendocino County).** This nonvintage 54% Pinot Noir-

46% Chardonnay sparkler is as good as ever, a beautiful peach color with peach and strawberry aromas and flavors that are not too overpowering, not too subtle, just right. The creamy mousse, medium body and bright acidity make it a stunner with food. Bring on the goat cheese fritters or tempura. —V.B.  
abv: 12% Price: \$23

**91 Gloria Ferrer 2007 Brut Rosé (Carneros).** A really nice sparkling wine from Gloria Ferrer. Mostly Pinot Noir, with some Chardonnay, it has a dark copper color and is full-bodied and rich in raspberry and strawberry flavors. Feels crisp and satisfying. Best over the next few years. —S.H.  
abv: 12.5% Price: \$42

**91 Laetitia 2008 Brut de Blancs (Arroyo Grande Valley).** For full review see page 6.  
abv: 12.5% Price: \$28

**91 Mumm Napa 2005 DVX Rosé (Napa Valley).** Pricey, yes, but a very good wine. Filled with fruity flavors of strawberries, raspberries, limes and tangerines, it has a toasty richness, and finishes dry despite the core of sweetness. The bubbles are a little rough, but this still is a very fine sparkling wine. —S.H.  
abv: 12.5% Price: \$65

**91 Mumm Napa 2003 DVX Méthode Traditionnelle (Napa Valley).** For full review see page 7.  
abv: 12.5% Price: \$55

**90 Gloria Ferrer NV Blanc de Noirs (Sonoma County).** For full review see page 8. *Editors' Choice.*  
abv: 12.5% Price: \$20

**90 Laetitia 2006 Brut Coquard (Arroyo Grande Valley).** For full review see page 8.  
abv: 12.5% Price: \$35

**90 Laetitia 2006 Cuvée M (Arroyo Grande Valley).** For full review see page 8.  
abv: 12.5% Price: \$35

**90 Scharffenberger NV Brut NV (Mendocino County).** A delicious Chardonnay and Pinot Noir blend from coolly grown Mendocino grapes that is equal parts golden apple and honey in both aroma and flavor. Creamy from full malolactic fermentation, this sparkler is full-bodied and plenty fruity with a caramel, vanilla tone on the finish. Will pair well with creamy, full-bodied foods. —V.B.  
abv: 12% Price: \$19

**89 Gloria Ferrer 2006 Blanc de Blancs (Carneros).** For full review see page 9.  
abv: 12.5% Price: \$24

**89 Iron Horse 2006 Brut X (Green Valley).** This is one of Iron Horse's drier wines, with a low dosage, but it's still fairly sweet. There's a coating of sugar on the raspberries, oranges and limes. The bubbles are a bit scoury now, but this Pinot Noir and Chardonnay blend could develop nuances in the cellar after, say, 2013. —S.H.  
abv: 13.5% Price: \$50

**89 Iron Horse 2006 Ocean Reserve (Green Valley).** A lovely sparkling wine, with a refined mouthfeel and intricate flavors of limes, strawberries, vanilla and yeasty lees. Extremely dry, it's a fine bubbly to drink with sushi or, if you're feeling extravagant, scrambled eggs with caviar. —S.H.  
abv: 13.5% Price: \$40

**88 Gloria Ferrer NV Va de Vi (Sonoma County).** For full review see page 10.  
abv: 12% Price: \$22

Continued on Page 14

## The Wine Enthusiast Buying Guide

The Buying Guide includes ratings and reviews of new-release and selected older beverage alcohol products evaluated by *Wine Enthusiast Magazine's* editors and other qualified tasters. Regular contributors to our Buying Guide include Senior Editor/Tasting Director Joe Czerwinski, Assistant Tasting Director Lauren Buzzeo, Tasting Coordinator Anna Lee C. Iijima, Executive Editor Susan Kostzewa, Contributing Editor Michael Schachner and Spirits Reviewer Kara Newman in New York, European Editor Roger Voss in Bordeaux, Italian Editor Monica Larner in Rome, California Editor Steve Heimoff in Oakland, Contributing Editor Paul Gregutt in Seattle and Contributing Reviewer Virginia Boone in Santa Rosa.

If a wine was evaluated by a single reviewer, that taster's initials appear following the note. When no initials appear following a wine review, the wine was evaluated by two or more reviewers and the score and tasting note reflect the input of all tasters. Unless otherwise stated, all Spirits Reviews are by Kara Newman and all beer reviews are by Lauren Buzzeo.

Each review contains a score, the full name of the product, its suggested national retail price, its abv as reported to us by the submitter and a tasting note. If price or alcohol content cannot be confirmed, NA (not available) will be printed. Prices are for 750-ml bottles unless otherwise indicated.

### TASTING METHODOLOGY AND GOALS

All tastings reported in the Buying Guide are performed blind unless otherwise noted. Typically, products are tasted in peer-group flights of from 5–8 samples. Price is not a factor in assigning scores. When possible, products considered flawed or uncustomary are retasted.

### ABOUT THE SCORES

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

Products deemed Unacceptable (receiving a rating below 80 points) are not reviewed.

### SPECIAL DESIGNATIONS

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

**Cellar Selections** are products 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 product 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 products that offer a high level of quality in relation to price. There are no specific guidelines or formulae for determining Best Buys, but wines meriting this award are generally priced at \$15 or less.

### SUBMITTING PRODUCTS FOR REVIEW

Products should be submitted to the appropriate reviewing location as detailed in our FAQ, available online via [winemag.com/contactus](http://winemag.com/contactus). Inquiries should be addressed to the Tasting & Review Department at 914.345.9463 or email [tastings@wineenthusiast.net](mailto:tastings@wineenthusiast.net). **There is no charge for submitting products.** We make every effort to taste all products submitted for review, but there is no guarantee that all products submitted will be tasted, or that reviews will appear in the magazine. All samples must be accompanied by the appropriate submission forms, which may be downloaded from our Web site.

### LABELS

Labels are paid promotions. Producers and importers 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](mailto:dvalenza@wineenthusiast.net).

Find all reviews on our fully searchable database at [buyingguide.winemag.com](http://buyingguide.winemag.com)



**97 Iron Horse 1997 Joy! Blanc de Blancs (Green Valley).** A triumph, really. Held back for 14 years and just recently disgorged, it's fantastically rich and complex, just oozing the most delicious orange, butterscotch, yeast and toast flavors. So silky, so sweet in fruit, and yet with a dry finish. Stands out in any tasting of the best sparklers. Hard to imagine a California bubbly better than this. —S.H.

abv: 13%

Price: \$179/1.5 L



**96 Charles Smith 2008 King Coal Cabernet Sauvignon-Syrah (Columbia Valley).**

This is the first time a King Coal has been made, all sourced from the Stoneridge Vineyard. It's a unique and delicious wine, seamless and complex. The flavors are amazingly detailed, with layer upon layer of candied fruit, raisins, Bourbon barrel, Asian spice, ginger, toast and more. The flavors pile on and continue into a seemingly endless finish, resonating into a spicy blend of fruit and Christmas cookies. **Editors' Choice.** —P.G.

abv: 15%

Price: \$100



**95 Duckhorn 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley).**

A tremendous Cabernet, one of the last to come from the great 2007 vintage. Drinking perfectly now, it's a soft, smooth sipper, with lush flavors of blackberries, blueberries, cherries, cocoa and cedar. The addition of Merlot brings a soft, mellowed mouthfeel. Picking up bottle bouquet at the age of four, it will continue to gain traction for many years. **Editors' Choice.** —S.H.

abv: 14.5%

Price: \$65

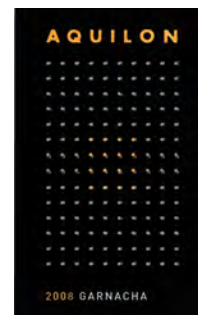


**95 Gloria Ferrer 2000 Carneros Cuvée (Carneros).**

The winery held back this brut-style wine for eleven years. Even at this great age, the wine tastes young and vibrant in acidity, with rich strawberry, orange, lime and yeast flavors, finished with sweet vanilla. Tastes beautiful now, but extraordinary as it is, it should gain traction over the next ten years. —S.H.

abv: 12.5%

Price: \$50



**94 Alto Moncayo 2008 Aquilon Garnacha (Campo de Borja).**

A huge load with sophistication and style to go with tons of raw power. Tobacco, balsam wood and pure blackberry aromas are stylish and enticing. Shows body and structure on the palate along with black fruit, mocha, chocolate and toast flavors. Long and heavenly on the finish. Drink now through 2015. Fine Estates From Spain. **Editors' Choice.** —M.S.

abv: 16%

Price: \$166



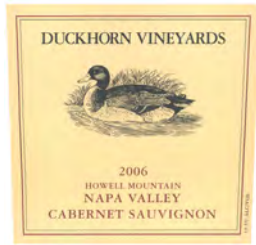
**94 Camiana 2006 Blue Hall Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Howell Mountain).**

The winery actually released this wine after the 2007, no doubt to give it the extra bottle age needed. Nonetheless, it's still quite tannic, bringing to mind an older style of Howell Mountain Cabernet. It's refreshing to have an ageable alternative to the soft, sweet modern style. Rich in mountain blackberries and sweet currants, this wine should develop over the next decade. **Cellar Selection.** —S.H.

abv: 14.5%

Price: \$59





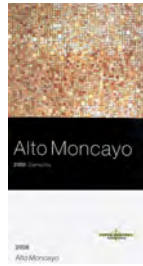
**94 Duckhorn 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon (Howell Mountain).** Here's one for the cellar, no doubt about it. Shows classic, old-fashioned Howell tannins, the kind that grip early and lock the palate down throughout. But you can't help but be struck by the immensity of fruit. Massive in sweet blackberries and black currants, liberally oaked, and with a core of minerals, it will develop over the next ten years, at the very least. **Cellar Selection.** —S.H.  
**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$75



**94 Duckhorn 2007 Three Palms Vineyard Merlot (Napa Valley).** A tremendous Merlot, Duckhorn's greatest since the 2005 and one of their best ever, over many years of crafting this wine. Feels soft and smooth and yet dusty and tannic all at once, while the flavors, of red and black cherries, blackberries, licorice, minerals and spices, are vast and succulent. A great Merlot, one of the successes of the vintage. Drink now and over the next six years, for freshness. —S.H.  
**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$85



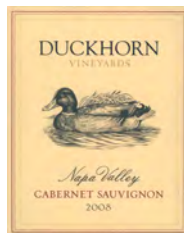
**94 Muga 2004 Prado Enea Gran Reserva (Rioja).** Exemplary Gran Reserva Rioja blending modernity with the best traditions of this famed region. Perfumed, lush and complex to start, then vibrant in the mouth, with excellent integration of flavors, acidity and tannins. Tastes of fine tobacco, mulled blackberry, chocolate and dry spices. Proper as the textbook calls for but individual as well. Best from 2014–2018. Fine Estates From Spain. **Cellar Selection.** —M.S.  
**abv:** 14% **Price:** \$66



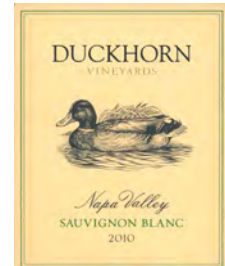
**93 Alto Moncayo 2008 Garnacha (Campo de Borja).** Gets out of the blocks with massive cedar, balsamic, tobacco and bold berry aromas. It's super rich and thorough in the mouth, with excellent balance for a 16% ABV Garnacha. Flavors of roasted black fruits, coconut, coffee and mocha are giant; finishes even more oaky and barrel-driven, with vanilla, coconut and toast flavors. Drink now through the winter of 2013. Fine Estates From Spain. **Editors' Choice.** —M.S.  
**abv:** 16% **Price:** \$47



**93 Chateau Ste. Michelle 2008 Cold Creek Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Columbia Valley).** Year in and year out, the Cold Creek Vineyard sources perhaps the most ageworthy, perfectly structured Cabernet in the entire Ste. Michelle portfolio. In 2008 the alcohol hits 15%, yet the tight, dense, cassid-laden body of the wine is intact, with an appropriate hint of herb. The length and balance once again suggest a wine that has decades of life ahead. **Cellar Selection.** —P.G.  
**abv:** 15% **Price:** \$28



**93 Duckhorn 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley).** One of the most succulent and drinkable Napa Cabernets of the '08 vintage. With Merlot added to the blend, it's rich in blackberries, cherries, currants and cedar, with firm but pliant tannins that give a beautiful structure. —S.H.  
**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$65



**93 Duckhorn 2010 Sauvignon Blanc (Napa Valley).** An interesting and complex wine, dry and crisp, and unique among California Sauvignon Blancs. Although there's plenty of citrus fruit, it's marked by other things, such as minerals and herbs, and the sweet, olivaceous taste that the variety's Sauvignon nature contributes in a cool vintage. —S.H.  
**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$27



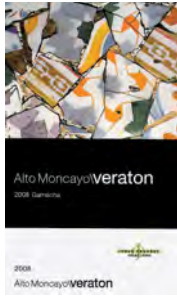
**93 Iron Horse 2003 Brut LD (Green Valley).** The vintage was kind to early ripeners, like the Pinot Noir and Chardonnay that constitute this bubbly. It's enormous in strawberry, raspberry, orange and lime flavors, with an exotic spiciness, but despite the richness it's fundamentally dry. Treads the line between soft approachability and acidic ageability, offering the choice of pleasurable drinking now, or cellaring through the decade to see how it develops. —S.H.  
**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$85



**93 Rocky Hill 2007 Richard Dinner Vineyards (Sonoma Mountain).** An enormously rich wine, flamboyant in blackberries, cherries, Dr Pepper cola, sweet cured meat, anise and black pepper flavors that sink in deep and last long into the finish. An unusual blend of Malbec, Merlot and Syrah, it's powerful in tannins and bone dry. Grill up your best steak and enjoy. —S.H.  
**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$36



**93 Santadi 2006 Terre Brune Superiore (Carignano del Sulcis).** Terre Brune is an icon wine of Sardinia in the same way Sassicaia is an icon of coastal Tuscany. Helping to shine the quality spotlight on this beautiful Mediterranean island, this plush red wine boasts rich berry density and sophisticated background tones of smoke and spice. Empson (USA) Ltd. **Cellar Selection.** —M.L.  
**abv:** NA **Price:** \$68



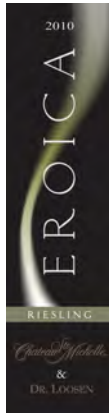
**92 Alto Moncayo 2008 Veraton Garnacha (Campo de Borja).** Smoky, peppery and tight on the nose, with leather and dark fruit aromas. The palate is chewy and dense, with syrupy richness and sweet flavors of ripe blackberry, toast, coffee, mocha and chocolate. Big and round on the finish; rock solid and seriously built. Drink now through 2013. Fine Estates From Spain. —M.S.  
**abv:** 15.5% **Price:** \$29



**92 B Side 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley).** From Don Sebastiani & Sons, a dramatically ripe, concentrated Cabernet, with fine, firm tannins framing blackberry, blueberry and cassis flavors. Really easy to drink now, and the price is quite good for the quality. **Editors' Choice.** —S.H.  
**abv:** 14.7% **Price:** \$25



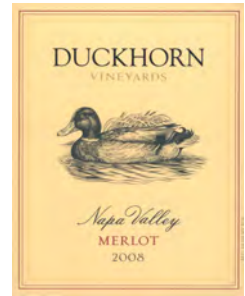
**92 Belle Glos 2009 Las Alturas Vineyard Pinot Noir (Santa Lucia Highlands).** A big, rich, full-bodied wine, flashy and dramatic. Floods the mouth with cherry-berry flavors, yet somehow feels light and elegant despite the weight and tannins, which is a kind of magic. You'll find all kinds of raspberries, cherries, sandalwood and exotic spices, but the wine isn't really ready. Give it 3–4 years in the cellar. **Cellar Selection.** —S.H.  
**abv:** 14.7% **Price:** \$44



**92 Chateau Ste. Michelle & Dr. Loosen 2010 Eroica Riesling (Columbia Valley).** Eroica has a proven ability to age; in fact it needs at least a half decade in the cellar to show its real strengths. Tight and packed with primary fruit flavors of lime and peach, this beautifully proportioned wine has perceptible sweetness but plenty of natural acidity. Lively and fresh today, but best given a few more years in the cellar. **Cellar Selection.** —P.G.  
**abv:** 12.5% **Price:** \$20



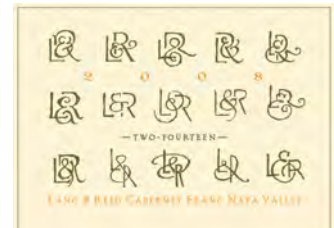
**92 Crosby Roamann 2009 Dark Garden Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley).** This newish winery swings for the fences with this dramatically ripe, soft and complex young Cabernet. It's made in the modern style, with appealing blackberry, black currant, dark chocolate and sweet oak flavors that impress for sheer intensity and flamboyance. Seems somewhat generic, in the way of cult Napa Cabs, but awfully good. It remains to be seen if a wine like this can get staying power, given the competition. —S.H.  
**abv:** 14.9% **Price:** \$60



**92 Duckhorn 2008 Merlot (Napa Valley).** Shows the soft, mellow feeling a fine Merlot should possess, although it's certainly tannic enough, in the Duckhorn style. However, the tannins are intricate and accessible, and frame lush cherry, red currant, licorice and cinnamon spice flavors. Hard to resist now, and should hold over the next four years. —S.H.  
**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$52



**92 Iron Horse 2006 Brut Rosé (Green Valley).** Unusually deep in color for a rosé. Shows a similar richness in the flavors, which are strong in raspberries, strawberries, limes and vanilla. The blend is 81% Pinot Noir, with the balance Chardonnay. Basically dry, this complex, elegant young sparkling wine could develop in the bottle. Drink now–2014. —S.H.  
**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$50



**92 Lang & Reed 2008 Two-Fourteen Cabernet Franc (Napa Valley).** An interesting wine that's instantly likeable, but has extra levels that lift it into real complexity. Red berry fruit dominates, with intricate spice, herb, mineral and cured meat umami notes. The tannins are refined. Best now–2013. —S.H.  
**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$40



**92 Mezzacorona 2005 Nos Riserva (Teroldego Rotaliano).** This stellar expression of Teroldego, a native grape of northern Italy, is only produced in the best years and in limited quantity. It delivers a soft, supple texture accented by savory notes of black fruit, leather, black pepper and a touch of shaved truffle. Prestige Wine Imports Corp. —M.L.  
**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$35



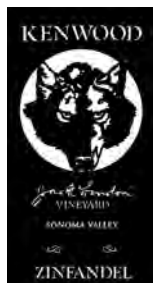
**92 Sierra Cantabria 2007 Reserva Única (Rioja).** Full and smoky at first, however as it settles the bouquet delivers ripe strawberry and additional red, jammy aromas. The palate has a healthy, very nice feel and diligent flavors of red berry fruit touched up by proper oak. Finishes creamy, with vanilla and spice flavors. Fine Estates From Spain. —M.S.  
**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$29



**91 Chateau Ste. Michelle 2008 Artist Series Red Meritage (Columbia Valley).** Smooth and supple, this five-grape Bordeaux-style blend is almost two thirds Canoe Ridge estate fruit from the Horse Heaven Hills AVA, the rest Cold Creek Vineyard Merlot. Lovely aromas of sandalwood, spice and cocoa lead into a textural wine, with seamless fruit and barrel flavors. —P.G.  
**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$55



**91 Jeriko 2010 Pommard Clone Pinot Noir (Mendocino).** With only 75 cases made, this is 100% Pommard clone Pinot in all its glory. Opening with a great red cherry nose, the wine is bright with a luscious texture, noticeable balance of acidity and depth and a long finish. A Mendo Pinot not from Anderson Valley that does the county proud. Made from biodynamic grapes. —V.B.  
**abv:** 13.9% **Price:** \$64



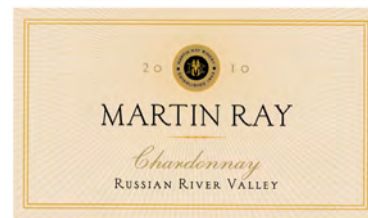
**91 Kenwood 2009 Jack London Vineyard Zinfandel (Sonoma Valley).** A picture-perfect Zinfandel from this famous vineyard. It's dry and soft in tannins and acids, and while it's a little high and sweet in alcohol, it's not too much. The raspberry, cherry, tobacco and bacon flavors finish in a swirl of peppery spices. *Editors' Choice.* —S.H.  
**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$20



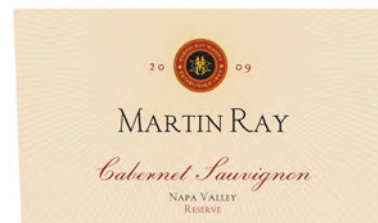
**91 Korta Katarina 2006 Reuben's Private Reserve Plavac Mali (Peljesac).** A kaleidoscope of scents and flavors, Korta Katarina's premiere bottling is a fascinating study of Plavac Mali at its best. Sweet on the nose and palate with hints of dark chocolate, café au lait, dried herbs and preserved fruit, it's a richly textured wine with a beautifully feminine profile. Big, bold tannins on the finish smooth out considerably with aeration. Katharine's Garden LLC. —A.I.  
**abv:** 15.4% **Price:** \$57



**91 Laetitia 2008 Brut de Blancs (Arroyo Grande Valley).** Good price for a sparkling wine this delicious and refined. Offers lots of bubbly pleasure, with orange, lime, vanilla, honey and yeasty flavors. Made from Chardonnay and Pinot Blanc. —S.H.  
**abv:** 12.5% **Price:** \$28

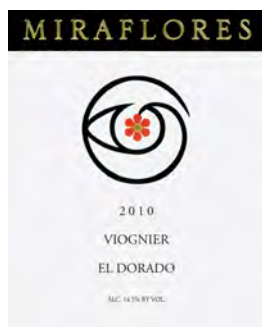


**91 Martin Ray 2010 Chardonnay (Russian River Valley).** So good for this price. Rich and creamy and ripe in tropical fruit, green apple and pear flavors, with the perfect touch of buttered toast from oak, and all that balanced and brightened with crisp acidity. Just what you want in a California Chardonnay. *Editors' Choice.* —S.H.  
**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$20



**91 Martin Ray 2009 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley).** A smooth, powerful Cabernet, made solidly in the modern style of exceedingly ripe fruit wrapped into soft tannins and then given an application of sweet oak. Shows many of the same characteristics of Napa Cabs costing far more, which makes it a relative bargain. *Editors' Choice.* —S.H.  
**abv:** 14.6% **Price:** \$25





**91** **Miraflores 2010 Viognier (El Dorado).** An incredibly fragrant Foothills Viognier pungent with jasmine/honeysuckle aromas that lead one into a world of rich lushness. This white is perfectly balanced—not too sweet, not too oily, the perfect tablemate when you're just not in the mood for Chardonnay. —V.B.  
**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$19



**91** **Mumm Napa 2003 DVX Méthode Traditionnelle (Napa Valley).** A brut-style sparkling, at the age of eight years it's still fresh and crisp, with yeasty flavors of limes, strawberries, vanilla and toast. Feels dry and austere despite a honeyed richness, just what you want in a great sparkling wine. Seems best over the next six years. —S.H.  
**abv:** 12.5% **Price:** \$55



**91** **Peju 2008 Fifty/Fifty (Napa Valley).** Made from exactly 50% Merlot and 50% Cabernet Sauvignon, this is a big, strong, powerful wine. It's explosive in blackberries, cherries, chocolate, anise and cedar, with lots of peppery spices. Robust and attractive now, it could gain traction over the next 3–5 years. —S.H.  
**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$85



**91** **Rua 2009 Merlot-Cabernet Franc (Napa Valley).** A blend of Merlot and Cabernet Franc, this wine is soft, rich and delicious. Although it's completely dry, it's enormously sweet in cherries, red currants, dark chocolate, anise and cedar. The tannins are furry and firm, making you wonder if it's worth cellaring. The best guess is that it's best now, with decanting, and over the next four years. —S.H.  
**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$48



**91** **Saviah Cellars 2008 Syrah (Walla Walla Valley).** Sourced from the new estate vineyard, this impressive young Syrah is compact and powerful. Scents of cinnamon, salted chocolate and black tea enhance the dark fruit flavors. Brandied cherries, smoke and earth streak on through a wine that seems to have a good decade of life ahead. —P.G.  
**abv:** 14.3% **Price:** \$32



**91** **Sebastiani 2008 Cherryblock Cabernet Sauvignon (Sonoma Valley).** This is the most expensive newly released Cherryblock ever, \$20 more than the 2007. It's quite a plush wine, softly velvety and rich in cherry and oak flavors. Already throwing considerable sediment, it's on the glidepath to a long, useful life. —S.H.  
**abv:** 14.4% **Price:** \$95



**91** **Trefethen 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (Oak Knoll).** Very ripe and deeply extracted in concentrated blackberry fruit, with a rich overlay of oak and the fine acidity and tannins that characterize a well made Napa Valley Cabernet. Lacks the stunning complexity of the '05 and even the '07, but still a remarkable wine. Needs time. Cellar until after 2015. **Cellar Selection.** —S.H.  
**abv:** 14.6% **Price:** \$58



**90** **Beronia 2006 Reserva (Rioja).** Classic and about as good as you get for a larger-production type of Rioja reserva. Butter, dill, coconut, earth and moss aromas are convincing, as is the palate of berry, fig and spice flavors. Rooty, toasty and complex, with style. Drink now through 2015. San Francisco Wine Exchange. —M.S.  
**abv:** 14% **Price:** \$20



**90** **Bodegas Franco-Españolas 2004 Rioja Bordon Gran Reserva Tempranillo (Rioja).** Starts out with baked, mulchy aromas of earthy leather, raisin and tobacco and gets more complex with air. The palate is narrow and clean, with good intensity and flavors of brown sugar, mocha and dried berry fruits. More light and oaky than fruity on the finish. Ready to drink now. Vision Wine & Spirits. —M.S.  
**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$24



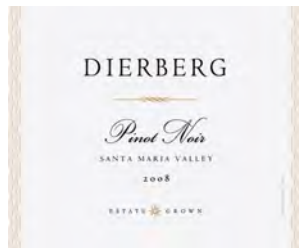
**90 Cascavel 2009 Le Cascavel (Ventoux).**

This blend of 50% Grenache, 30% Carignan and 20% Syrah was aged in cement tanks for eight months prior to bottling, but retains bold, fresh fruit notes of black cherry, tinged with hints of licorice and coffee. Drink this muscular red over the next five years. Bourgeois Family Selections. *Editors' Choice.* —J.C.  
**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$16



**90 Courtney Benham 2009 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon (Mount Veeder).**

A strong Cabernet, even an aggressive one, with very ripe, punchy blackberry and dried currant flavors that are deep and long lasting. The tannins are powerful, too. End result is a tough young wine that wants some time in the cellar. Stash until 2015. *Cellar Selection.* —S.H.  
**abv:** 14.8% **Price:** \$40



**90 Dierberg 2008 Pinot Noir (Santa Maria Valley).**

One of the riper, sweeter Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noirs, brimming with jammy raspberry, cherry and cinnamon flavors. Almost like a candy bar, but saved from simplicity by great acids and tannins and a tangy minerality. In fact, it's delicious. —S.H.  
**abv:** 14.1% **Price:** \$42



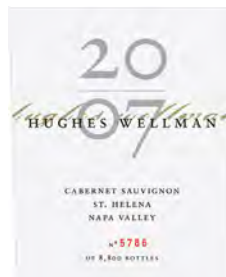
**90 Fess Parker 2010 Ashley's Chardonnay (Sta. Rita Hills).**

Fantastically ripe and oaky, a Chardonnay that just swamps the palate with wave after wave of pineapple jam, tangerine tart, apricot pie filling and sweet butterscotch and vanilla flavors. All this richness fortunately is balanced with crisp acidity and a fine tang of minerals. —S.H.  
**abv:** 14.1% **Price:** \$34



**90 Gloria Ferrer NV Blanc de Noirs (Carneros).**

There's a lot going on for the price in this honeyed, rich blush wine. Pinot Noir gives hints of strawberries, while Chardonnay contributes limes and oranges. The result is a smooth, crisp sipper for drinking now. *Editors' Choice.* —S.H.  
**abv:** 12.5% **Price:** \$20



**90 Hughes Wellman 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (St. Helena).**

Negotiant Cameron Hughes got his hands on some seriously good Cabernet to come out with this beauty. It's soft enough to drink right away, with luxurious tannins framing ripe, sweet flavors of blackberries, cherries and licorice. Sweet oak gives a rich layer of toast. Drink now. —S.H.  
**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$50



**90 Jeriko 2010 Dijon Clone Pinot Noir (Mendocino).**

This wine can stand a few more years in bottle to truly reveal itself but for now, it's full-bodied yet supple and silky, with raspberry, cola and earthy spice notes throughout. Only 270 cases made of this biodynamic Pinot Noir, all Dijon clone, a fine representation of what Mendocino can do with Pinot outside of the Anderson Valley. —V.B.  
**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$48



**90 Laetitia 2006 Brut Coquard (Arroyo Grande Valley).**

Mainly Pinot Noir, this is a rich, full-bodied sparkling wine with raspberry and strawberry flavors. Some 20% Chardonnay adds citrus fruits and bright acidity. It's a charming, slightly sweet wine whose mouthfeel is refined. —S.H.  
**abv:** 12.5% **Price:** \$35



**90 Laetitia 2006 Cuvée M (Arroyo Grande Valley).**

Sort of a junior version of the winery's pricier vineyard block bruts, this blend of Chardonnay and Pinot Noir is addictively good. Slightly sweet in honey, it has lime, raspberry and yeast flavors, in a richly textured mousse. —S.H.  
**abv:** 12.5% **Price:** \$35

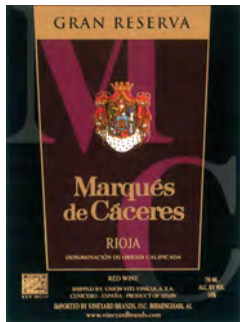




**90 MacRostie 2009 Chardonnay (Sonoma Coast).** Made from various vineyards scattered around this huge appellation, MacRostie's '09 Chardonnay offers brilliantly etched fruit brightened by crisp, coastal acidity. Strikes a nice balance between ripe pears and sweet, vanilla-scented oak. *Editors' Choice.* —S.H.

**abv:** 14.1%

**Price:** \$25



**90 Marqués de Cáceres 2004 Gran Reserva (Rioja).** Sweet berry aromas offer touches of marzipan and leather. The palate is ripe, vibrant and grabby, with full tannins framing plum and berry flavors along with accents of tobacco and earth. Lightly oaky on the finish, with a vanilla note and dryness. Shows good weight and clarity; Drink now through 2015. Vineyard Brands. —M.S.

**abv:** 14%

**Price:** \$35



**90 Martin Ray 2010 Reserve Chardonnay (Los Carneros).** Fresh and zesty in acidity, this Chardonnay has forward flavors of ripe green apples, peaches, oranges and vanilla cream, with a little bit of smoky oak. It's an easy wine to like, and grows better as it warms in the glass. —S.H.

**abv:** 13.5%

**Price:** \$26

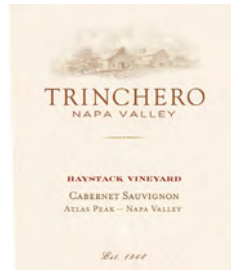


**90 Trinchero 2008 Cloud's Nest Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Mount Veeder).**

Dry, tough and gritty. The main issue is the tannins, which are hard as nails, and coat the mouth with sand-papery astringency. Yet underneath is a solid core of blackberry fruit. Classically old style Mount Veeder, this Cabernet wants a good six years in the cellar, and it could develop for far longer. *Cellar Selection.* —S.H.

**abv:** 14.6%

**Price:** \$60

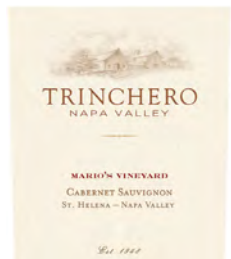


**90 Trinchero 2008 Haystack Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Atlas Peak).**

The tannins stand front and center in this mountain wine, but they're so finely textured, you hardly notice them. They glide over the palate, carrying along ultraripe blackberry flavors. A firm grounding of minerals provides additional structure. This rich Cabernet should develop bottle complexity over the next eight years. —S.H.

**abv:** 14.9%

**Price:** \$60



**90 Trinchero 2008 Mario's Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (St. Helena).**

A really good Cabernet for drinking now. Shows the dry sophistication you want, with fine, dusty tannins framing delicious blackberry, olive, cedar and spice flavors. Feels distinguished, and should develop interestingly over the next 6-8 years. —S.H.

**abv:** 14.9%

**Price:** \$60



**89 Gloria Ferrer 2006 Blanc de Blancs (Carneros).**

Chardonnay grapes star in this rich bubbly. It's attractive in pear, orange, papaya and toast flavors, with a fine edge of sourdough yeast. The bubbles are a little scoury, but otherwise this is a good price for a vintage sparkling wine. —S.H.

**abv:** 12.5%

**Price:** \$24



**89 Martin Ray 2010 Unoaked Chardonnay (Russian River Valley).**

One of the best unoaked Chardonnays out there. So brilliantly ripe and pure in pineapples, tangerines, green apples and peaches, you won't miss the oak at all. With crisp acidity, it's a wonderful wine to drink with shellfish. —S.H.

**abv:** 14.3%

**Price:** \$19



**89 Montecillo 2003 Gran Reserva (Rioja).**

Mellow on the nose, with sweet aromas of maple, raisin and sautéed mushroom. Just fresh enough in the mouth, with toffee, vanilla, butter, coconut and mature roasted berry flavors. Delivers a lot of mocha on the finish as it maintains elegance and freshness. Ready to drink. Underdog Wine Merchants. —M.S.

**abv:** 13%

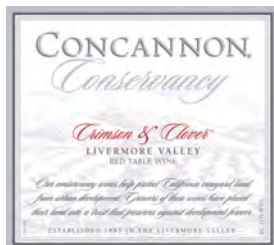
**Price:** \$25



**89 Vilarnau 2008 Brut Nature Reserva (Cava).** Crisp apple, peach and mild yeast notes make for a solid, attractive bouquet. The palate is cleansing and angular, with flavors of white fruits, particularly nectarine. Shows a chalky, tight texture on a clean, fresh finish. San Francisco Wine Exchange. —M.S.  
**abv:** 11.5% **Price:** \$18



**89 Vionta 2010 Limited Release Albariño (Rías Baixas).** Simple and airy on the nose, with melon, apple and citrus notes. It's spritzy, healthy and citrusy in the mouth, with comfortable, familiar pineapple and melon flavors. Holds steady on the finish. Very nice for immediate drinking. Freixenet USA. —M.S.  
**abv:** 13% **Price:** \$15



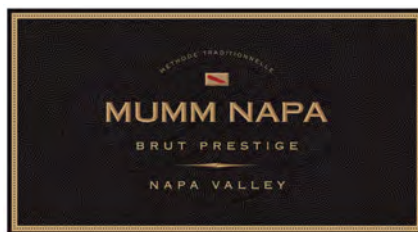
**88 Concannon 2009 Conservancy Crimson & Clover (Livermore Valley).** An incredible value at \$15 SRP, this is a new endeavor for Concannon, a blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah, Zinfandel and Petite Sirah (50%) that's nicely crafted and very drinkable with a signature Petite Sirah presence in terms of body weight and blackberry fruit as well as plenty of Zin spice and Cab structure. A great deal for everyday meals. —V.B.  
**abv:** 13.7% **Price:** \$15



**88 Gloria Ferrer NV Va de Vi Ultra Cuvée (Sonoma County).** This is basically the same as Gloria's brut, only they added some Muscat and made it a little sweeter. With sugared raspberry, lime, orange and brioche flavors, made brisk with acidity, it will satisfy those who like some plumpness in their sparkling wines. —S.H.  
**abv:** 12% **Price:** \$22



**88 Jeriko 2010 Reserve Pinot Noir (Mendocino).** Easier to find than Jeriko's Pommard or Dijon bottlings, the Reserve is dark and earthy with mushroom, dark cherry and a tiny bit of spice floating behind the scenes. The 14.7% alcohol level brings this wine into a bigger style of Pinot territory but is well done and should get even better with time. —V.B.  
**abv:** 14.7% **Price:** \$38



**88 Mumm Napa NV Brut Prestige (Napa Valley).** Nice and smooth, with refined bubbles that feel like silk gliding across the tongue. The orange, strawberry and vanilla flavors are slightly sweet. —S.H.  
**abv:** 12.5% **Price:** \$22



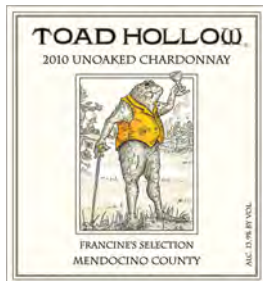
**88 Pagos del Moncayo 2009 Garnacha (Campo de Borja).** A powerful specimen that plows straight ahead on the bouquet, dealing out whiffs of rubber, smoke and hickory along the way. Meaty feeling and deep, with roasted blackberry, woodspice and bitter chocolate flavors. Dark and chocolaty on the finish, with a note of bacon. Axial Wines USA. —M.S.  
**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$15



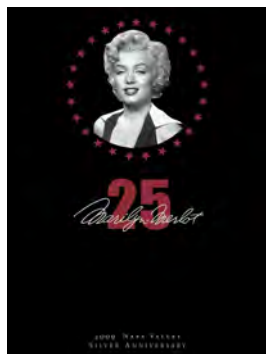
**87 Franciscan 2008 Merlot (Napa Valley).** Shows the soft, sensual mouthfeel you want in a nice Merlot, like silk gliding across the tongue, and the cherry and herb flavors are just fine. Misses some depth and complexity, but it's an elegant, restaurant-style wine for the money. —S.H.  
**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$21



**87 Korbel 2008 Natural (Russian River Valley).** A nice, easy to like bubbly that shows why Korbel dominates the market at this price. It's dry and rich in citrus, vanilla, yeasty dough and charred, smoky flavors. Easy to find, with 20,000 cases produced. —S.H.  
**abv:** 12% **Price:** \$16



**87 Toad Hollow 2010 Francine's Selection Chardonnay (Mendocino County).** This unoaked Chardonnay is bright with lemon and green apple flavors, almost a little too bright, its acidity bracing in its intensity. Lemon lovers, this one's for you. —V.B.  
**abv:** 13.9% **Price:** \$15



**86 Marilyn 2009 Silver Anniversary Merlot (Napa Valley).** Lots of rich raspberry, cherry and blackberry fruit in this softly appealing wine. It's also pretty oaky. Not much going on below the surface, but it sure is a pretty surface. —S.H.  
**abv:** 13.9% **Price:** \$30

 **SPIRITS**



**96 The Dalmore Cigar Malt Reserve (Scotland; Shaw-Ross Importers, Miramar, FL).** Honey-amber color and a big butter-scotch aroma. Intriguingly dry and earthy, with leather, tobacco, dark chocolate and clove flavors, which accelerate with repeated sips and linger on. Add ice if you must, but avoid watering down this delicious after-dinner treat, which would be even better accompanied by a well-selected dark chocolate or two.  
**abv:** 44% **Price:** \$125



**95 Glenmorangie The Nectar D'Or 12 Years Old (Scotland; Moët Hennessy USA, New York, NY).** This golden spirit is often flagged by bartenders and sommeliers as a favorite; it's easy to see why. A decade in Bourbon casks, plus an extra two years in Sauternes barriques yields a fresh honeysuckle and vanilla perfume and a super-smooth spirit with creamy honey and nut flavors, with hints of dark chocolate and cinnamon. Very few spirits have such elegance

and silky finesse. Good value, too.  
**abv:** 46% **Price:** \$70



**93 Glenmorangie The LaSanta 12 Years Old (Scotland; Moët Hennessy USA, New York, NY).** Aged in Bourbon casks for 10 years, then "extra matured" for two years in Oloroso Sherry casks. The result is luxe and rich, a fine after-dinner sipper. Allow a little time for the aroma to emerge, and a splash of water for maximum flavor. The reward is a thick caramel aroma and flavor, with mouthwatering spicy notes of clove, cassia bark and a hint of orange peel.  
**abv:** 46% **Price:** \$50



**93 Jura Prophecy (Scotland; Shaw-Ross Importers, Miramar, FL).** A smooth and soft option for peat lovers. This golden spirit has a lightly smoky aroma, with rounded caramel flavor and just the right amount of lingering smoke. Limited edition release.  
**abv:** 46% **Price:** \$75

 **SPIRITS**



**93 The Dalmore King Alexander (Scotland; Shaw-Ross Importers, Miramar, FL).** Wine lovers will want to cap a special-occasion meal with this rich and interesting Highland specimen. Created from Scotches matured in a variety of wine casks, including Madeira, Port, Marsala, even Cabernet Sauvignon, look for a copper-penny color, heady aromas of red berries, dried fruit and marzipan, and a toffee-sweet flavor with a spicy finish. Striking, gift-worthy bottle with a stag's head on the front.

**abv:** 40% **Price:** \$268



**93 The Glenlivet 18 Year Old (Scotland; Pernod Ricard USA, Purchase, NY).** Vibrant orange-amber color and a warm, citrusy scent. Expect lots of honey and caramel from the get-go, winding into an interestingly dry and lingering finish entwining leather, cocoa, coconut and ginger. Good value.  
**abv:** 43% **Price:** \$90



**92 The Glenlivet Nàdurra Aged 16 Years (Scotland; Pernod Ricard USA, Purchase, NY).** Light and versatile, although at over 100 proof "natural cask strength," this golden spirit could stand some dilution, whether via a dose of ice water or mixing into a cocktail. Perfumy floral-honey nose, with flavors of vanilla lemon, oak, and a hint of smoke on the finish.  
**abv:** 54.9% **Price:** \$60



 **SPIRITS**



**91** Glenmorangie The Quinta Ruban 12 Years Old (Scotland; Moët Hennessy USA, New York, NY). While “extra finished” for two years in ruby Port casks, the impact on the spirit is minimal, imparting a rose-gold hue and a shadow of red berry flavor. Though it lacks the “wow factor” of the Nectar d’Or, it’s still quite good: Expect a warm, fruity scent with a hint of cedar and a smooth caramel-honey flavor with baking spices on the finish.  
**abv:** 46% **Price:** \$50



**91** The Dalmore 18 Years Old (Scotland; Shaw-Ross Importers, Miramar, FL). Sherry finishing is particularly evident in the amber color and pretty dried fruit aromas. Give this Highland single malt a few minutes to open up, then enjoy the lively burnt orange peel, toffee and clove flavors.  
**abv:** 43% **Price:** \$165



**91** The Glenlivet The French Oak Reserve 15 Years of Age (Scotland; Pernod Ricard USA, Purchase, NY). Don’t dilute this light, gentle Scotch too much. Enjoy the honeyed, fresh tropical fruit aromas and mouthwatering vanilla and almond flavors with a hint of smoke and spice on the finish. Light body. Good value.  
**abv:** 40% **Price:** \$50

 **SPIRITS**



**90** Glenmorangie Extremely Rare 18 Years Old (Scotland; Moët Hennessy USA, New York, NY). Some of the Scotch is finished in Oloroso Sherry casks, which accounts for the honey and dried fruit fragrance. The spirit has a smooth, soft feel and a touch of juicy sweetness. Look for caramel and vanilla and rather aggressive oakiness, finishing with orange peel. Best with some time to open up.  
**abv:** 43% **Price:** \$100



**90** Glenmorangie The Original Ten Years Old (Scotland; Moët Hennessy USA, New York, NY). Smooth and mellow, like nuts drizzled with honey or Bit O’Honey candy, with a light vanilla finish. Matured in Bourbon casks for 10 years.  
**abv:** 43% **Price:** \$40



**90** The Glenlivet 12 Years of Age (Scotland; Pernod Ricard USA, Purchase, NY). Vibrant gold with orange highlights, fruity scent of apples and pears plus a whiff of vanilla. Soft, velvety feel. This is a pleasant and drinkable Scotch, but the flavors are relatively muted. It mixes well with other flavors, making it a good contender for cocktails. Good value.  
**abv:** 40% **Price:** \$35

 **BEST BUYS**



**91** Chateau Ste. Michelle 2010 Dry Riesling (Columbia Valley). Kudos to Ste. Michelle for accurately labeling this wine, and also for the Riesling sweetness scale on the back of all their Rieslings. Firm Yakima Valley fruit is the backbone here, tart and spicy, with bright flavors of pear and apple. A juicy, palate-cleansing style. **Best Buy.** —P.G.  
**abv:** 13% **Price:** \$9



**90** Chateau Ste. Michelle 2010 Riesling (Columbia Valley). Ste. Michelle produces almost a million cases of this wine, yet keeps quality way up there and the price affordable. Despite the off-dry style it gives a relatively dry palate impression, a mix of limes and pears, tart through the middle and then showing a hint of honey in the finish. **Best Buy.** —P.G.  
**abv:** 11% **Price:** \$9



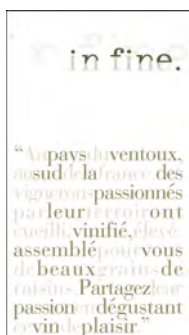
**90** Leese-Fitch 2010 Sauvignon Blanc (California). A lovely Sauvignon Blanc, dry, crisply acidic and clean, with complex citrus, flower and mineral flavors. A great value for the money. **Best Buy.** —S.H.  
**abv:** 13% **Price:** \$13

 **BEST BUYS**



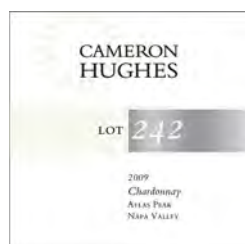
**90 Three Rivers 2009 River's Red Wine (Columbia Valley).** A more focused River's Red than in recent vintages, the 2009 clicks on all cylinders. Initially it strikes you as a pleasantly fruity and forward blend, but in fact it's 74% Cabernet from a mix of A-level vineyards. It plays out well across a full midpalate, with mixed berries, cherries, hints of forest, earth, toast, juicy acids, fine-grained tannins and a lick of mocha in the finish. **Best Buy.** —P.G.

**abv:** 14.1% **Price:** \$14



**88 Bourgeois Family 2009 In Fine (Ventoux).** A relatively full-bodied, chunky red with firm tannins, this is a burger wine par excellence, and priced so that you don't feel you've overspent. Slightly herbal overtones mark the black cherry fruit, just enough to impart a savory quality. Bourgeois Family Selections. **Best Buy.** —J.C.

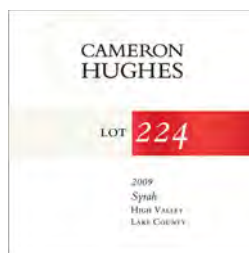
**abv:** 14% **Price:** \$12



**88 Cameron Hughes 2009 Lot 242 Chardonnay (Atlas Peak).** At this price, this is one of the Chardonnay steals of the year. It's made in the popular style, rich in ripe tropical fruit flavors, with a stony core of minerals, and liberally enhanced with sweet, smoky oak. **Best Buy.** —S.H.

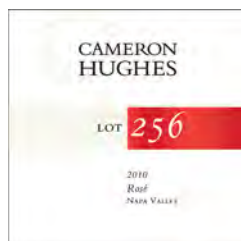
**abv:** 14.6% **Price:** \$13

 **BEST BUYS**



**87 Cameron Hughes 2009 Lot 224 Syrah (High Valley).** With a great nose of dark plum, raspberry and peppery black licorice one has to wonder, how does he do it? Cameron Hughes that is, again and again making great wines at great values. Very easy drinking. **Best Buy.** —V.B.

**abv:** 14.9% **Price:** \$12



**87 Cameron Hughes 2010 Lot 256 Rosé (Napa Valley).** Just what you want in a rosé, at a good price. It's a robust wine, dryish and spicy, with a creamy mouthfeel framing pleasant raspberry, cherry, prosciutto and vanilla flavors. **Best Buy.** —S.H.

**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$12



**87 Dolmo 2009 Vendimia Seleccionada Tempranillo (Ribera del Duero).** Fresh, spicy cherry aromas are nice and clean. The palate is racy and staunch, with good acidity and tasty plum and berry flavors. Solid and medium-long on the finish, with a touch of minty herb flavor. Juicy and moderately oaky for a \$10 value wine. Vicente Gandia PLA. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$10

 **BEST BUYS**



**87 Freixenet NV Cordon Rosado Brut (Cava).** Crisp cherry aromas come with smoke and dryness. The palate is healthy, smooth and offers a good bubble bead in front of toasty raspberry and chocolate flavors. Dry and spicy on the finish; fresh and lively as a whole. Freixenet USA. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

**abv:** 12% **Price:** \$12



**87 Raiza 2007 Crianza Tempranillo (Rioja).** Dry, spicy and firm on the nose, with just enough cherry and plum to make it attractive. Juicy, fresh and lithe in the mouth, with medium oak, earth, berry and plum flavors. Solid and slightly woody and peppery on the finish. Vicente Gandia PLA. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

**abv:** 14% **Price:** \$11



**87 Segura Viudas NV Brut Reserva (Cava).** White fruits and candied apple aromas turn a little dusty with airing. The palate is crisp and standard, with no issues and juicy flavors of lightly sweetened apple, nectarine and citrus. Clean on the finish. Freixenet USA. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

**abv:** 12% **Price:** \$10

 **BEST BUYS**



**87 Segura Viudas NV Brut Rosé (Cava).** Simple, light strawberry aromas form a good opening. The palate is juicy and bright, with citrus and nectarine flavors. There's nothing complicated or overreaching here; it's easygoing, clean and finishes with pepper and brown sugar. Freixenet USA. **Best Buy.** —M.S.  
**abv:** 12% **Price:** \$10



**86 Nebla 2010 Vendimia Nocturna Verdejo (Rueda).** Light, floral and yeasty on the bouquet. The palate is citrusy, with some flesh to the mouthfeel and flavors of lime, green herbs and apple. Mixes roundness with some edge on the finish. Vicente Gandia PLA. **Best Buy.** —M.S.  
**abv:** 12.5% **Price:** \$9



**86 Stellar Organics 2011 No Added Sulfites Pinotage (Western Cape).** A nice entry into Pinotage, this organic offering boasts typical aromas of juicy berry and bramble against a sweet spice spine. It's lively and bright but a firm structure and supporting acidity keeps things in balance. The Triton Collection. **Best Buy.** —L.B.  
**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$10

 **BEST BUYS**



**85 Jaume Serra NV Cristalino Brut (Cava).** A little cidery and funky smelling at first, but it settles to show stalky notes, scallion, tarragon and citrus flavors. Layered in feel but a bit green tasting throughout. CIV/USA. **Best Buy.** —M.S.  
**abv:** 11.5% **Price:** \$10



**84 J. Garcia Carrion 2009 Antaño Viura (Rioja).** Neutral and subdued on the nose, and probably a bit past its sell-by date. The palate is wet and innocuous, with dry papaya and apricot flavors. Finishes with a tropical leaning. CIV/USA. **Best Buy.** —M.S.  
**abv:** 12.5% **Price:** \$6



**84 René Barbier NV Mediterranean Red (Catalunya).** Despite an opening that features some vinegary sharpness and mulch, there's also decent berry fruit notes and milk chocolate sweetness to the nose. Feels about as you'd expect, which means it's zesty and lean, with cherry, plum and herbal flavors. Juicy and minty on the finish. Freixenet USA. **Best Buy.** —M.S.  
**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$6

Continued from Page 2

**88 Iron Horse 2007 Wedding Cuvée (Green Valley).** A beautiful wine, in the Iron Horse style, with plenty of ripe fruit balanced with crisp acidity. The lime, strawberry and raspberry flavors have a pleasantly yeasty edge, with a slightly sweet finish. —S.H.  
**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$38

**88 Iron Horse 2006 Russian Cuvée (Green Valley).** This is one of Iron Horse's sweeter sparkling wines. There's a sugary edge to the raspberry, strawberry, lime and orange flavors. But it's not too sweet, and there's plenty of balancing acidity. The blend is 75% Pinot Noir and 25% Chardonnay. —S.H.  
**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$38

**88 Laetitia 2008 Brut de Noirs (Arroyo Grande Valley).** This 100% Pinot Noir is full bodied and ripe, with raspberry, strawberry, vanilla and yeast flavors. It's a little sweet, and the bubbles are scoury, but it sure is rich. —S.H.  
**abv:** 12.5% **Price:** \$28

**88 Laetitia 2007 Brut Rosé (Arroyo Grande Valley).** A beautiful color, sort of a peach blush orange-pink, suggesting richness. And there it is in the mouth, an explosion of raspberries, strawberries, limes and honey. Definitely on the sweet side, but balanced with clean sparkling acidity. Nice with sushi. —S.H.  
**abv:** 12.5% **Price:** \$28

**88 Mumm Napa NV Brut Prestige (Napa Valley).** For full review see page 10.  
**abv:** 12.5% **Price:** \$22

**87 Chandon NV Blanc de Noirs (California).** A good sparkling wine for the price. Medium-bodied, it has pretty flavors of strawberries and limes. The bubbles are a little fierce in texture. —S.H.  
**abv:** 13% **Price:** \$22

**87 Chandon NV Brut Classic (California).** Lots to like in this dryish to slightly sweet brut. It has polished lime, strawberry, vanilla and yeasty flavors. The all-important texture of the bubbles is a little rough and scoury. —S.H.  
**abv:** 13% **Price:** \$22

**87 Gloria Ferrer NV Sonoma Brut (Sonoma County).** A fine California bubbly, a little scoury in the mouth and sweet in the finish. But the orange, strawberry and lime flavors are good, and the wine satisfies for basic sparkling character. —S.H.  
**abv:** 12.5% **Price:** \$20

**87 Iron Horse 2006 Classic Vintage Brut (Green Valley).** A savory sparkling wine, rich in raspberry, lime and vanilla flavors. Mainly Pinot Noir, with some Chardonnay, it's full bodied and somewhat sweet. —S.H.  
**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$34



**87 Korbel 2008 Natural (Russian River Valley).** For full review see page 10.  
abv: 12% Price: \$16

**87 Laetitia NV Brut Cuvée (Arroyo Grande Valley).** Rich and ripe, with tasty lime, strawberry and yeast flavors that finish sweet and spicy. The bubbles are a bit clunky, but otherwise it's a nice brut. —S.H.  
abv: 12.5% Price: \$22

**87 Laetitia NV XD (Arroyo Grande Valley).** A brut-style wine, this bubbly is overtly sweet. It has sugary flavors of raspberries, strawberries, limes and yeast, and is fortunately balanced with crisp acidity. —S.H.  
abv: 12.5% Price: \$22

**87 Mumm Napa NV Brut Reserve (Napa Valley).** A good, scoury sparkler, with nice citrus, vanilla and toast flavors and a whistle-clean finish. The bubbles are a little rough. —S.H.  
abv: 12.5% Price: \$36

**87 Mumm Napa NV Brut Rosé (Napa Valley).** Lots of deliciousness in this softly smooth sparkler. It's flattering in orange cream, strawberry, vanilla and toast flavors. Tastes a bit sweet, like a spoonful of sugar is in there, but it's polished and clean. —S.H.  
abv: 12.5% Price: \$24

**87 Mumm Napa NV Cuvée M (Napa Valley).** A fine California bubbly, soft and luxurious in the finesse of its bubbles. The orange, strawberry and vanilla cream flavors are overtly sweet, making this a good partner for wedding cake. —S.H.  
abv: 12.5% Price: \$22

**87 Roederer Estate NV Brut (Anderson Valley).** Lots of rich, yeasty citrus and strawberry flavors in this dry, elegant sparkler. The bubbly texture could be more refined, but it's a nice Champagne-style wine. —S.H.  
abv: 12% Price: \$23

**86 J. Keverson NV Bubbles for Boobies (North Coast).** The winery donates to breast cancer research and cure. The wine is pretty good, offering rich, sweet flavors of raspberries, oranges and limes. —S.H.  
abv: 12.5% Price: \$20

**86 Korbel NV Blanc de Noirs (California).** Really rich in cherry, vanilla, toast and yeasty sour-dough flavors, a full-bodied, pleasant bubbly that has a bit of sweetness to round off the rough edges. —S.H.  
abv: 12% Price: \$13

**86 Korbel NV Brut Rosé (California).** With a pale copper color, this is a full-bodied sparkler whose orange, raspberry and vanilla flavors offer plenty of satisfaction. It's a little sweet, but fine acidity and a scour of bubbles provide clean balance. —S.H.  
abv: 12% Price: \$13

**86 Korbel NV Chardonnay (California).** Lots of savory vanilla, orange and sweet Meyer lemon flavors in this sparkling wine. The bubbles are a lit-

tle rough and scoury, but it's pretty good for the price. —S.H.  
abv: 12.5% Price: \$13

**85 Korbel NV Extra Dry (California).** Not really dry, with honey, lemongrass and yeasty, pastry flavors. A little aggressive in the bubbles, but a nice wine for the price, if you like your bubbly on the sweet side. —S.H.  
abv: 12% Price: \$13

**84 Allure NV Pink Moscato (California).** As sweet and carbonated as a soda drink, with raspberry and vanilla flavors. Yet it's absolutely clean and vibrant. Easy to drink if you like your bubbly on the sugary side. —S.H.  
abv: 10% Price: \$13

## CALIFORNIA REDS

### CABERNETS & BLENDS

**96 Conn Creek 2007 Stagecoach Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Atlas Peak).** A tremendous Cabernet, showing the authority of its vineyard, high up in the Vaca Mountains. Dry and full-bodied, this wine is spectacularly rich in blackberries, cassis and minerals and is well oaked. What's most remarkable is the quality of the tannins. They're firm, yet soft and sweetly refined. A tremendous accomplishment, and should develop in the bottle for a decade. At this price, an outstanding value. *Editors' Choice.* —S.H.  
abv: 15% Price: \$45

**95 Duckhorn 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley).** For full review see page 3. *Editors' Choice.*  
abv: 14.5% Price: \$65

**94 B Cellars 2008 Beckstoffer To Kalon Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley).** Tough and gritty in tannins, with a furry astringency, and very dry. Not ready to drink now, but shows its pedigree in the unusually refined blackberry, black currant and dark chocolate fruit flavors that are deep and long lasting in the aftertaste. Feels lush and smooth. Give it a good six years in the cellar and try again. *Cellar Selection.* —S.H.  
abv: 14.8% Price: \$125

**94 Camiana 2006 Blue Hall Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Howell Mountain).** For full review see page 3. *Cellar Selection.*  
abv: 14.5% Price: \$59

**94 Duckhorn 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon (Howell Mountain).** For full review see page 4. *Cellar Selection.*  
abv: 14.5% Price: \$75

**94 Parallel 2008 Estate Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley).** Expensive? Yes. But this is the kind of wine that tastes expensive and will impress just about everyone. It's thoroughly modern in the soft, pliant tannins and the fantastic explosion of ripe blackberry, blueberry and chocolate fruit that has a welcome

touch of olives. So soft, it may not age well, but sure is decadently good now. —S.H.  
abv: 14.9% Price: \$125

**94 Trione 2007 Block Twenty One Cabernet Sauvignon (Alexander Valley).** Very strong, ripe and extracted. The word massive comes to mind. So packed with blackberry and blueberry preserves, it's almost a food group in itself. Then there are the tannins, huge and soft, giving the wine dramatic refinement. Defines the modern style, and shows that Alexander Valley doesn't have to take second place to Napa Valley when it comes to Cabernet Sauvignon. —S.H.  
abv: 14.5% Price: \$64

**93 B Cellars 2008 Syn3rgy Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley).** A low-production blend of various vineyards, this could be the poster child for classic, drink-me Napa Cabernet. It's dry, smooth but rich in tannins, and enormously flavorful in blackberries, blueberries and currants. Oak, of course, plays a vital role. Upscale and impressive, it's a fine Cabernet for drinking now and over the next eight years. —S.H.  
abv: 14.9% Price: \$55

**93 Conn Creek 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Spring Mountain).** A big, vital Cabernet that feels dramatic from start to finish. Shows powerful mountain tannins and fruity concentration, packing a punch of blackberries, black currants and minerals. Terrific now after decanting, and should develop through 2015, at least. —S.H.  
abv: 14.5% Price: \$45

**93 Duckhorn 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley).** For full review see page 4.  
abv: 14.5% Price: \$65

**93 Knights Bridge 2008 Beckstoffer Dr. Crane Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley).** A beautiful Cabernet that's made in the modern style of exceptional ripeness and softness, yet maintains an elegance that belies the sweet fruit. Just explodes with chocolate, blackberry, blueberry and black raspberry jam and toasty oak flavors. Delicious and compelling. —S.H.  
abv: 15.5% Price: \$135

**93 Oberon 2007 Hillside Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley).** There's quite an impressive Cabernet in here, but it's nowhere near ready to drink now. All the parts are there: rich, pure tannins, ripe blackberry and currant fruit, sweet toasty oak and a fine edge of acidity. But it all needs time to knit together. Hold until around 2014 and see what happens. *Cellar Selection.* —S.H.  
abv: 14.5% Price: \$75

**92 B Side 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley).** For full review see page 5. *Editors' Choice.*  
abv: 14.7% Price: \$25

**92 Bjorn 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (Howell Mountain).** Here's a big, huge, rich Cabernet, made solidly in the modern style of extreme ripeness and oakiness. It defines that Napa mountain intensity of concentrated blackberry and cassis fruit, with notes

of dark chocolate and toasted cedar wood. It's a glamorous wine, although it may be too soft to age. Drink now—2014. —S.H.

**abv:** 14.8% **Price:** \$75

**92 Cali 351 2008 Founder's Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley).** This is an amazingly rich Cabernet, packed with classic Napa blackberry, blueberry and dark chocolate flavors. It's opulent even by California standards, and is a little sweet. With firm, pronounced tannins, it's gritty in texture. Defines Napa ripeness, but at this point it's rude and jammy. Give it a good six years. Could be one for the long haul. *Cellar Selection.* —S.H.

**abv:** 14.7% **Price:** \$75

**92 Coup de Foudre 2009 37.2 Cuvee (Napa Valley).** This is a Merlot and Cabernet Franc blend from Calistoga. The wine is made in the Coup de Foudre style, which is soft, sensual and immediately attractive. Shows blueberry, black cherry and dark chocolate flavors, with a deft touch of oak, but also notable tannins. Seems too soft to age, so drink over the next four years. —S.H.

**abv:** 14.8% **Price:** \$75

**92 Coup de Foudre 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley).** Another rich, soft, sensual release from this winery. Cabernet doesn't get riper than this, showing flashy, decadent blackberry, blueberry and currant flavors, liberally enriched with toasty oak. Seems too sweet and soft for aging, but a flashy wine to drink now. —S.H.

**abv:** 14.8% **Price:** \$95

**92 Crosby Roamann 2009 Dark Garden Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley).** For full review see page 5.

**abv:** 14.9% **Price:** \$60

**92 Knights Bridge 2008 Beckstoffer To Kalon Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley).** So sweet and rich, it's almost like a dessert in the form of wine. Oozes decadent blackberry jam, milk chocolate and toasty oak flavors. The fruit is so ripe, it veers into raisins, but not too much. Drink this flashy wine over the next four years. —S.H.

**abv:** 15.5% **Price:** \$135

**92 M by Michael Mondavi 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley).** Rich and dramatic by any standards, this new release offers a blast of ripe blackberry, currant and mineral flavors. New oak adds the perfect touch of smoky caramel. It's pretty tannic, yet drinkable now after a good decant. Should age well throughout the decade. *Cellar Selection.* —S.H.

**abv:** 14.3% **Price:** \$200

**91 Martin Ray 2009 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley).** For full review see page 6. *Editors' Choice.*

**abv:** 14.6% **Price:** \$25

**91 Peju 2008 Fifty/Fifty (Napa Valley).** For full review see page 7.

**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$85

**91 Rua 2009 Merlot-Cabernet Franc (Napa Valley).** For full review see page 7.

**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$48

**91 Sebastiani 2008 Cherryblock Cabernet Sauvignon (Sonoma Valley).** For full review see page 7.

**abv:** 14.4% **Price:** \$95

**91 Three Sticks 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Sonoma Valley).** A seriously good Cabernet that advances the cause of Sonoma Valley. It's soft and rich and decadently good, offering wave after wave of blackberry pie, cherry jam and sweet oak flavors that are a little on the sweet side. Shows enough acidity and tannin structure to provide balance. Drink now with a good steak, chop or lamb dish. —S.H.

**abv:** 14.6% **Price:** \$65

**91 Trefethen 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (Oak Knoll).** For full review see page 7. *Cellar Selection.*

**abv:** 14.6% **Price:** \$58

**90 Courtney Benham 2009 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon (Mount Veeder).** For full review see page 8. *Cellar Selection.*

**abv:** 14.8% **Price:** \$40

**90 Evolve 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon (Mount Veeder).** Shows the firm tannins of this mountain appellation, and also ripe, concentrated blackberry, cassis and dark chocolate fruit. Easy to drink now for its rich appeal, but should age well for six years or so. —S.H.

**abv:** 14.4% **Price:** \$30

**90 Hughes Wellman 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (St. Helena).** For full review see page 8.

**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$50

**90 Signorello 2008 Padrone Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley).** Few wines in the world are richer than this blend of Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot. It's extraordinarily powerful in ripe, concentrated raspberry, cherry and blackberry jam, liberally oaked. Soft and velvety, it seems designed to appeal to sheer hedonism, at the cost of ageability. Drink up. —S.H.

**abv:** 14.7% **Price:** \$135

**90 Trinchero 2008 Cloud's Nest Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Mount Veeder).** For full review see page 9. *Cellar Selection.*

**abv:** 14.6% **Price:** \$60

**90 Trinchero 2008 Haystack Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Atlas Peak).** For full review see page 9.

**abv:** 14.9% **Price:** \$60

**90 Trinchero 2008 Mario's Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (St. Helena).** For full review see page 9.

**abv:** 14.9% **Price:** \$60

**89 Broll Mountain Vineyards 2005 Cabernet Sauvignon (Calaveras County).** Broll

is showing some nice finesse here, even though it's still stylistically a big wine. Its leathery, savory and earthy notes really linger on the lengthy finish, all brick and tar and still, even after all this time in bottle, tight. Though 15.5%, the wine doesn't taste hot and could develop for another 2–3 years to come. —V.B.

**abv:** 15.5% **Price:** \$32

**89 Hall 2008 Bergfeld Cabernet Sauvignon (St. Helena).** The big question about this wine is will it age. It certainly appeals to the palate for its flashy sweetness, ripe in blackberries, raspberries, cherries and cocoa. And there's a generous overlay of oak. Still, it's hard to get past a certain directness. Your best bet is to stash it away and keep your fingers crossed over the next six years. —S.H.

**abv:** 14.9% **Price:** \$100

**89 Martorana 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Dry Creek Valley).** Amazing extraction on this vigorous young Cabernet, which is much riper and smoother than the 2006 was. Just explodes in ripe summer cherries and raspberries, with a sweet edge of oak. Fuzzy Dry Creek tannins provide the perfect structure. —S.H.

**abv:** 14.2% **Price:** \$45

**89 Parallel 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley).** Made in the Parallel style of soft, rich tannins and ultraripe fruit, this Cabernet is instantly flashy for its wealth of blackberries, black currants, dark chocolate and oak. Defines the modern Napa style, although it's too soft to age, so drink up. —S.H.

**abv:** 14.4% **Price:** \$55

**89 Signaterra 2008 Sunny Slope Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Sonoma Valley).** Smooth in tannins, rich and ripe in black cherry, mocha and spice flavors, and beautifully oaked, this Cabernet shows real elegance and style. It's a bit earthier and more abrupt than the modern style exemplified in neighboring Napa Valley, but still a fine wine. —S.H.

**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$65

**88 Cameron Hughes 2009 Lot 267 Cabernet Sauvignon (Spring Mountain).** Impressive in concentrated mountain fruit, this Cabernet has a gigantic core of ripe blackberries, blueberries and cherries. It's a sweet wine, in the fruity sense, but is fully dry, and balanced with fine tannins and acidity, not to mention a firm minerality that comes from the earth. —S.H.

**abv:** 14.6% **Price:** \$22

**88 Cameron Hughes 2009 Lot 278 Meritage (Spring Mountain).** Good price for a wine this rich and pleasing. With masses of blackberries, cherries, currants, anise and cedar folded into firm tannins, it's ready to drink now. Just might be the best value you'll find in a Spring Mountain wine, red or white. —S.H.

**abv:** 14.2% **Price:** \$18

**88 Cameron Hughes 2007 Lot 287 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley).** Lots of rich blackberries, cherries and chocolate in this Cab, but it's no mere fruit bomb. It's saved by a fine structure of acids and tannins. Very nice price for a wine this good. —S.H.

**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$20

**88 Highlands 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley).** Distinctly Californian in the hugeness of the ripe fruit, just massive in blackberries and black cherries, liberally oaked and soft. Not particularly subtle at this time, but could do interesting things in the cellar. No guarantees. —S.H.  
abv: 15% Price: \$60

**88 Jettlynn 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Paso Robles).** A rich, ripe, flamboyant Cabernet, brimming with blackberry, cassis and smoky oak flavors. Feels soft and silky in the mouth, making it fine for drinking now. —S.H.  
abv: 14.9% Price: \$15

**88 Peter Paul Wines 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley).** An excellent wine for drinking now. It's dry and fruity, with a meaty, fleshy texture housing flavors of blackberries, cherries, herbs and oak. Fine enough to drink with a good steak. —S.H.  
abv: 14.4% Price: \$40

**88 Retzlaff 2005 Cabernet Sauvignon-Merlot (Livermore Valley).** A nicely made Cab-Merlot blend with earthy, dark plum, spicy cinnamon and clove and a touch of menthol herby-ness, especially on the finish. The mellow texture on this wine will see that it pairs nicely with a range of fall and wintertime foods. —V.B.  
abv: 13.5% Price: \$39

**88 Signorello 2008 Estate Grown and Bottled Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley).** Sweet ripe fruit and sweet oak combine to make this Cabernet as rich and tasty as a dessert pastry. It's on par with recent vintages of Signorello Cabernet, an easy wine to like, but a bit lacking in dry substance. Probably best now. —S.H.  
abv: 14.7% Price: \$55

**87 Arroba 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon (Alexander Valley).** There's something softly seductive about this Cabernet. Its tannins are finely ground and acidity is low, resulting in a melted, velvety mouthfeel. The flavors are just fine, of black cherries and cedar. —S.H.  
abv: 14.1% Price: \$20

**87 Atlas Peak 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley).** Lots of acidity in this still-young Cabernet, giving the blackberry and cassis flavors a real bite that accentuates the tannins. It's tough now despite the richness, but doesn't have the stuffing for aging, so drink now with rich fare to balance the acids. —S.H.  
abv: 14.5% Price: \$35

**87 Cameron Hughes 2008 Lot 290 Cabernet Sauvignon (Spring Mountain).** Marked by rich, ripe fruit, this Cabernet explodes in blackberries, cherries and cedar. There's an earthy-sweet richness, like milk chocolate, and the tannins are thick, but soft, like velvet. Ready to drink now. —S.H.  
abv: 14.8% Price: \$22

**87 Courtney Benham 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon (Alexander Valley).** Good price for a Cabernet this pleasantly rich. Made for drinking now,

it's soft and herbal, in the Alexander Valley way, with black cherry and blueberry flavors, kissed with oak. —S.H.  
abv: 13.9% Price: \$18

**87 Duckhorn 2007 Rector Creek Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley).** This has not been one of Duckhorn's most successful bottlings over the years. It's inconsistent. This '07 is sweet and jammy in raspberries, cherries and blackberries, with plenty of caramelized oak adding to the sweetness. Delicious and classy, but lacks a certain something, especially at this price. —S.H.  
abv: 14.5% Price: \$85

**87 Fallbrook 2008 33 Degrees North Gracie Hill Vineyard, Clone 4 Cabernet Sauvignon (South Coast).** A very minty, woody, red-fruit Cab with soft tannins that's quite drinkable. 100% Cab though it tastes and smells as though there could be Cab Franc. —V.B.  
abv: 14.2% Price: \$33

**87 Lyeth 2008 Chronology Grand Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon (Sonoma County).** Ripe fruit stars in this exuberant wine. It flatters with black cherry, blackberry, anise and cassis flavors that go on and on into a long, spicy finish. Beyond that it's a little sweet, and seems best now, with a salty, peppery steak or chop. —S.H.  
abv: 15% Price: \$30

**87 Lyeth 2009 Reserve Meritage (Sonoma County).** Good price for a rich wine like this. It's big and potent in black cherry and black currant flavors, with a flashy coating of sweet oak. Feels elegant and balanced in the mouth. —S.H.  
abv: 13.5% Price: \$16

**87 Newton 2009 Red Label Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa County).** Ripe and sweet in chocolate and blackberries, this is a Cabernet made for drinking now with rich fare, such as short ribs. It's soft in both tannins and acids, which makes it instantly appealing. —S.H.  
abv: 13.5% Price: \$28

**87 Oberon 2008 Hillside Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley).** Lots to admire in this wine, from the smooth, complex tannins to the classic blackberry and cassis flavors. However, it's very acidic, surprising the palate with the sting of a jellyfish. Hard to predict its future. —S.H.  
abv: 14.5% Price: \$75

**87 Peju 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley).** Lots of richness in this massively extracted Cabernet, which explodes in blackberries, cassis, dark chocolate, anise and oak. It's a bit rough in the mouth, though, with dry, sticky tannins. —S.H.  
abv: 14.5% Price: \$45

**87 Spence 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Howell Mountain).** Tastes a little hot, even though the official alcohol is only 14.7%, and that heated impression is compounded by blackberry flavors that veer

into Porty raisins. Rich and dry, but a bit bitter in raisinskins. —S.H.  
abv: 14.7% Price: \$65

**86 Avalon 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley).** Tons of ripe, jammy blackberry, blueberry and milk chocolate flavors in this softly sweet Cabernet. For under 20 bucks, it impresses for audacious richness. —S.H.  
abv: 13.8% Price: \$18

**86 Cass 2008 Estate Grown Cabernet Sauvignon (Paso Robles).** Soft and ripe in the Paso style, with blackberry, cherry and raisin flavors, as well as smoky, caramelized oak. It's an easy-to-drink, rather country-style wine for opening now. —S.H.  
abv: 14.2% Price: \$45

**86 Casto Oaks 2008 Gardner Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Sierra Foothills).** A Cab from near Yosemite, grown at 3,000-foot elevation with big texture and tannins that could develop into something interesting. —V.B.  
abv: 14.3% Price: \$19

**86 Greystone 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon (California).** A solid wine for everyday drinking when Cabernet is the desired wine. Shows firm tannins and forward flavors of black currants and cedar, with a long, spicy finish. **Best Buy.** —S.H.  
abv: 13.5% Price: \$11

**86 Highway 12 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon (Sonoma County).** Soft and sweet in milk chocolate and blackberry jam flavors. A simple, tasty wine at a pretty good price for what you get. —S.H.  
abv: 14.3% Price: \$20

**86 Highway 12 2009 Serres Ranch (Sonoma Valley).** This is a blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Merlot. It's very rich and ripe in blackberries, cherries and milk chocolate, and is a little sweet. Offers plenty of upfront pleasure with a grilled steak. —S.H.  
abv: 14.3% Price: \$24

**86 JuneRay 2008 Ashlow Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley).** They swung for the fences and scored a double with this wildly overpriced wine. It's too soft and sweet, with a taste like melted raspberry and cherry jam. Flashy, yes, but lacks structural interest and complexity. —S.H.  
abv: 14.6% Price: \$97

**86 Kenwood 2009 Jack London Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Sonoma Valley).** This bottling is a commodity wine, comfortable delivering predictability. It's fine in blackberry, blueberry, cherry and oak flavors, wrapped into smooth tannins. —S.H.  
abv: 14.5% Price: \$30

**86 L de Lyeth 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon (Sonoma County).** A little aggressive in an edgy texture, but for the price, this Cab offers plenty of richness and is a solid value. It's sweet and jammy in cherries, blueberries and cocoa. —S.H.  
abv: 13.9% Price: \$13



**86 Stone Edge Farm 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Sonoma Valley).** At the age of four-plus years, the tannins still are tough and astringent in this Cabernet, making it hard to appreciate the underlying blackberry, blueberry and currant flavors. It's bone dry, but those tannins don't seem like they'll ever age out, so drink up. —S.H.  
**abv:** 14.3% **Price:** \$60

**86 Three Saints 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (Happy Canyon of Santa Barbara).** A big, rich, fruity Cabernet. It's a little one-dimensional, but there's no denying that the blackberries, cherries and raspberries are delicious. Drink now. —S.H.  
**abv:** 14.7% **Price:** \$22

**85 Adelaida 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (Paso Robles).** A little on the sweetish side, which may be due to residual sugar and/or excessively high alcohol. Either way, it tastes like black cherry jam and pepper. —S.H.  
**abv:** 15.1% **Price:** \$32

**85 Avalon 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon (California).** Huge blackberry, currant and chocolate flavors in this smooth Cabernet. It's soft and a little sweet, but gets the job done at a fair price. —S.H.  
**abv:** 13.8% **Price:** \$12

**85 Big Vine 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley).** Very soft and melted, lacking structure, although the flavors are enormous. They're explosive in blackberries, chocolate, anise and smoky cedar. Despite the flaws, this is a fairly impressive Napa Cabernet for the price. —S.H.  
**abv:** 14.2% **Price:** \$18

**85 Brander 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon (Santa Ynez Valley).** Despite lots of ripe black cherry, blueberry and plum flavors, this is a fairly rustic wine, with some edgy tannins making it feel prickly. A bit sweet, it will pair up with Mexican beef and pork dishes. —S.H.  
**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$28

**85 Cameron Hughes 2009 Lot 230 Cabernet Sauvignon (Chalk Hill).** Nice and dry, with solid black cherry, herb and smoky tea flavors that finish in a swirl of tannins. Easy to drink with steak, pork loin, a great cheeseburger. —S.H.  
**abv:** 14.3% **Price:** \$16

**85 Casto Oaks 2009 Gardner Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Sierra Foothills).** Casto Oaks' Cab is still supertight and needs some time to open. Hard to say if its aromas and flavors will develop further. —V.B.  
**abv:** 14.3% **Price:** \$39

**85 Courtney Benham 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley).** A good wine for the price. Shows plenty of ripe blackberry, cherry and blueberry fruit, accented with sweet, smoky oak. Drink this easy Cabernet now. —S.H.  
**abv:** 13.9% **Price:** \$20

**85 Icaria 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (Alexander Valley).** Icarus, in Greek myth, got too

close to the sun. So did this wine from Icaria. It's not bad, but simply overripe. Has a sweet taste of raisins, in addition to the sweet smokiness from oak. Drink now. —S.H.  
**abv:** 14.2% **Price:** \$28

**85 La Storia 2009 Estate Cabernet Sauvignon (Alexander Valley).** This is a ripe, soft Cabernet, forward in blackberry, cherry and oak flavors. It's a little sweet, but the tannins give it proper support. Drink now. —S.H.  
**abv:** 13.9% **Price:** \$25

**85 Signaterra 2008 Three Blocks Cabernet Sauvignon (Sonoma Valley).** Way too sweet in ripe, jammy cherry-berry fruit and caramelized oak, resulting in a Cabernet that tastes like the wine equivalent of a granola candy bar. Fans of this sweet style will like it. —S.H.  
**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$49

**84 Bellarina 2008 Meritage (Knights Valley).** Unripe, with a green, stalky, vegetal edge to the blackberries and cherries. Although it's dry and the tannins are rich, the wine suffers from that defect. —S.H.  
**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$20

**84 Cameron Hughes 2009 Lot 257 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley).** A little unripe, with vegetal notes accompanying the riper black cherry fruit. Feels somewhat harsh in green tannins, too. Otherwise, a decent everyday Cabernet. —S.H.  
**abv:** 14.7% **Price:** \$20

**84 Dunning Vineyards 2008 Meritage (Paso Robles).** Made in a soft, sweet style, this Cabernet Sauvignon-based wine has jellied flavors of blackberries, blueberries and cherries, encased in plenty of sweet, caramelized oak. Ready now. —S.H.  
**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$32

**84 Huge Bear 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (Sonoma County).** This 100% Cabernet is too sweet, tasting like a raspberry, mocha and caramel Starbucks drink. It's the poster child for overextracted, overoaked, high alcohol California Cabernet. —S.H.  
**abv:** 15.5% **Price:** \$55

**84 Leese-Fitch 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon (California).** Made in the modern style designed to appeal for sheer fruity richness. Blasts off with cherry and blackberry jam flavors, while oak adds caramelized sweetness. Rustically simple, but for the price, a pretty good buy. —S.H.  
**abv:** 13.9% **Price:** \$13

**84 Martin Ranch 2007 J.D. Hurley Cabernet Sauvignon (Santa Cruz Mountains).** Too much oak and too much acidity on this unbalanced young Cabernet. It feels angular and weirdly sweet, with Lifesaver candy blackberry and cherry fruit flavors. Give it a good long decant. —S.H.  
**abv:** 14% **Price:** \$30

**84 Martin Ranch 2007 Thérèse Vineyards Estate Cabernet Sauvignon (Santa Cruz Mountains).** Not much going on here beyond wildly

extracted fruit. It's jammy in cherries and raspberries, with a sweet coating of caramelized oak. —S.H.  
**abv:** 14.2% **Price:** \$45

**83 Cameron Hughes 2009 Lot 248 Cabernet Sauvignon (Alexander Valley).** Soft and sweet in berries and cherries, like the fruit filling from a pie. There are some good tannins for structure, but the wine ultimately is pretty simple. —S.H.  
**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$13

**83 Stone Edge Farm 2007 Surround Cabernet Sauvignon (Sonoma Valley).** Too sweet by far, like melted cherry and blackberry jam, with heat from alcohol and a hit of acidity. Drink up. —S.H.  
**abv:** 14.4% **Price:** \$30

**82 Cameron Hughes 2009 Lot 250 Meritage (Napa County).** An indifferent wine, hot and baked, with jammy sweet berry flavors. —S.H.  
**abv:** 14.6% **Price:** \$10

**82 Carmenet 2009 Vintner's Collection Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon (California).** Sugary sweet in berry-cherry fruit, with a cut of acidity that doesn't feel natural. An awkward wine, but passable. —S.H.  
**abv:** 12.5% **Price:** \$12

**81 Greedy 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon (Alexander Valley).** As sweet and sugary as a desert wine, with watery berry flavors. —S.H.  
**abv:** 14.4% **Price:** \$27

**81 Morro Bay 2009 Split Oak Estates Cabernet Sauvignon (California).** Way too sweet and soft to qualify as a dry table wine. Okay for big parties where everyone's drinking happily from paper cups. —S.H.  
**abv:** 13.9% **Price:** \$12

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## OTHER RED BLENDS

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**93 B Cellars 2008 Blend 25 Cabernet Sauvignon-Syrah (Napa Valley).** One of the best Cabernet-Syrah blends out there. The Cabernet dominates, with firm tannins and blackberry and currant flavors, but Syrah brings a meatiness, like teriaki beef. Terrifically interesting, this wine should develop over the next four years. —S.H.  
**abv:** 14.9% **Price:** \$55

**93 Rocky Hill 2007 Richard Dinner Vineyards (Sonoma Mountain).** For full review see page 4.  
**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$36

**92 Reid Family Vineyards 2008 Hannah's Blend (Napa Valley).** A big, deep, impressive wine that feels flashy from the first sniff to the last swallow. A Merlot-based Bordeaux blend, with a splash of Petite Sirah, it's enormously rich in berries, cherries and dark chocolate, with a pleasantly earthy note of olives and herbs. The finish is bone dry. This is a very fine value in a full-bodied red wine of such charm. *Editors' Choice.* —S.H.  
**abv:** 14% **Price:** \$25

**90 Ancient Peaks 2009 Renegade Margarita Vineyard (Paso Robles).** This winery's best bottlings are its red blends, and this is certainly one of them. Made from a unique combination of Syrah, Malbec and Petit Verdot, it's bone dry, deeply tannic and sweet in blackberries, plums, herbs, tobacco, bacon and sandalwood. The tannins suggest drinking with rich meats and cheeses. *Editors' Choice.* —S.H.  
**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$23

**90 Barber 2009 Lo Scuro (Sonoma County).** Lots of pepper and spice in this dry, briary red blend. Could be Zinfandel, except it's not. The components are Sangiovese, Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot. A good value for a wine this complex and delicious. *Editors' Choice.* —S.H.  
**abv:** 14% **Price:** \$20

**90 Tudal 2008 Napa Valley Cuvée (Napa Valley).** This is a blend of Petite Sirah, Zinfandel and Malbec, and is one of the best of its type out there. A muscular, potent wine as befits the varieties it's made from, it's richly tannic and layered, with blackberry, plum, bacon, dark chocolate and pepper flavors. *Editors' Choice.* —S.H.  
**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$20

**89 Newsome-Harlow 2009 The Deviant (Calaveras County).** NH is making a heritage blend here from 50% Carignane, 30% Zinfandel from the Big John Vineyard and 20% Petite Sirah from Dalton Vineyard, all grown in Calaveras County. Superfull in body and texture, the blend is high in ripe raspberry and plum, Zin-spicy with savory cedar and smokiness too. —V.B.  
**abv:** 14.8% **Price:** \$42

**89 Nottingham Cellars 2008 Ralph's Red Blend (Livermore Valley).** People will love this Cab Sauvignon-Merlot blend (60%-40%) that's got bright red fruit, mostly cherry and raspberry, finished with a tinge of cocoa. —V.B.  
**abv:** 14.26% **Price:** \$29

**89 Trenza 2008 Tinto (San Luis Obispo County).** This unusual blend of Syrah, Grenache, Tempranillo and Mourvèdre is the kind of red wine that needs spicy, salty beef or lamb to balance it. It's tannic, acidic and peppery, with a roasted meat edge to the blackberry fruit. Calls to mind Italian-style fare, rich in olive oil and cheeses. —S.H.  
**abv:** 14.9% **Price:** \$30

**88 Concannon 2009 Conservancy Crimson and Clover (Livermore Valley).** For full review see page 10.  
**abv:** 13.7% **Price:** \$15

**87 Chalk Hill 2008 Estate Red (Chalk Hill).** A bit hot, with 15.6% alcohol by volume, which compromises the mouthfeel. That's despite some delicious blackberry, cherry and chocolate flavors. Drink now. —S.H.  
**abv:** 15.6% **Price:** \$70

**87 Fallbrook 2008 33 Degrees North Gracie Hill Vineyard, BDX (South Coast).** This blend of Bordeaux varieties (39% Cab Sauv, 37% Mer-

lot, 12% Petit Verdot, 8% Cab Franc and 4% Malbec) opens with a nice purity of fruit, mainly plum and cassis and shows a deftness of blending. There's a touch of green pepper at the finish. —V.B.  
**abv:** 14.4% **Price:** \$33

**86 Landy Family Vineyards 2008 Melange de Vin Rouge Estate (Russian River Valley).** Shows lots of berry fruit, with touches of green olives, sweet herbs, cocoa, funky leather and cedar, wrapped into firm tannins. A funny wine. Good and rich, but struggles to achieve complex interest, especially at this price. —S.H.  
**abv:** 14.9% **Price:** \$56

**86 Ridge 2009 Lytton Springs (Dry Creek Valley).** This blend of Zinfandel, Petite Sirah and Carignane sure did get ripe, but it's too fruity and simple, offering little beyond massive blackberry, blueberry, cherry and currant flavors. An only-in-California wine, it's easy to drink now if you need a full-bodied, tannic red. —S.H.  
**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$35

**86 San Marcos Creek 2009 Epiphany (Paso Robles).** Rich, oily meats and cheeses are what this Syrah, Cabernet Sauvignon and Petite Sirah blend needs, because it's so toughly tannic. The char of broiled meat will complement the cherry and blackberry sweetness. —S.H.  
**abv:** 15.2% **Price:** \$30

**85 Cameron Hughes 2009 Lot 251 G-S-M (Arroyo Seco).** A bit thin and quite acidic, with a real bite, but otherwise it's pleasant enough, with cherry, raspberry, mocha and cinnamon flavors. —S.H.  
**abv:** 14.3% **Price:** \$13

**84 Cameron Hughes 2009 Lot 244 Field Blend (California).** This blend is based on Zinfandel. It's the kind of wine California produces so easily. Dry and smooth, if rather hot in alcohol, the flavors suggest wild raspberries and cherries, with a spicy, oaky coating. —S.H.  
**abv:** 16.2% **Price:** \$12

**84 Courtney Benham NV Lucca (Napa Valley).** A country-style red wine, made from indeterminate varieties. It's tough and stringy in the mouth, with earthy berry and tobacco flavors. —S.H.  
**abv:** 13.9% **Price:** \$13

**84 MommyJuice NV Red (Central Coast).** A darkly colored red blend that tastes like coffee sweetened with blackberry liqueur and anise. It's a big, rich, thick wine that's rustic, but entirely drinkable with barbecue, burgers, pizza. —S.H.  
**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$10

**84 Steelhead Vineyards 2009 Steelhead Red (Sonoma County).** A simple country wine, with solid berry, cherry and spice flavors. The blend is Cabernet Sauvignon and Zinfandel, with a touch of sweet oak. —S.H.  
**abv:** 14.2% **Price:** \$15

**84 The Federalist 2009 Dueling Pistons (Dry Creek Valley).** Smells a little vegetal, tastes

soft, sweet and hot in alcohol. Once past all that, this blend of Zinfandel and Syrah is incredibly rich in raspberries, cherries and blackberries. —S.H.  
**abv:** 15% **Price:** \$35

**83 Trentadue 2010 Old Patch Red Lot #32 (North Coast).** A sharp, acidic wine that feels rustic in the mouth. It has sweetened wild berry, clove and pepper flavors. —S.H.  
**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$11

**82 San Marcos Creek 2009 Ruby (Paso Robles).** Simple, sweet and rustic. Shows candied flavors of cherries, with hard, drying tannins. The blend is Zinfandel, Petite Sirah and Syrah. —S.H.  
**abv:** 15.1% **Price:** \$30

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## MERLOT

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**94 Duckhorn 2007 Three Palms Vineyard Merlot (Napa Valley).** For full review see page 4.  
**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$85

**92 Duckhorn 2008 Merlot (Napa Valley).** For full review see page 5.  
**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$52

**90 Avalon 2009 Merlot (Napa Valley).** One of the best Merlot values on the market. With rich, delicious cherry, anise and sandalwood flavors, wrapped into softly smooth tannins, it's just what a California Merlot should be. Easy to find, with 10,000 cases produced. *Best Buy.* —S.H.  
**abv:** 13.8% **Price:** \$15

**90 Jettlynn 2008 Single Vineyard Merlot (Paso Robles).** What a value. Pretty much as delicious as Paso reds get, although it's high in alcohol. Dazzles with cherry, blackberry, currant, dark chocolate, sweet sandalwood and cinnamon spice flavors. *Best Buy.* —S.H.  
**abv:** 15.5% **Price:** \$15

**89 Peju 2007 Merlot (Napa Valley).** Here's a lovely red wine, soft and appealing, and perfect for drinking now. It's dry and silky in tannins, with intricately layered cherry, smoked meat, pepper and sandalwood flavors. —S.H.  
**abv:** 14.1% **Price:** \$35

**89 Roth 2009 Merlot (Alexander Valley).** A very nice Merlot, polished and dry. It has a smooth, silky texture, and shows a complex array of cherry, olive, herb, sandalwood and spice flavors. Elevated enough for a white tablecloth restaurant, at a fair price. —S.H.  
**abv:** 14.6% **Price:** \$27

**88 Charles Krug 2008 Merlot (Napa Valley).** A lovely Merlot, softly tannic and rich, with oak-influenced herbs, cherries, blackberries and cassis. It's stongly flavored, but nuanced, with an elegant structure. Drink now. —S.H.  
**abv:** 14.3% **Price:** \$24

**88 Stag's Leap Wine Cellars 2007 Merlot (Napa Valley).** You might want to age this for a couple years, because it's a little tough in tannins, more so than you might expect from a Napa Merlot. But it's very rich in cherry, red currant, green olive and oak flavors. —S.H.  
**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$45

**87 Benziger 2007 Merlot (Sonoma County).** Surprisingly rich and complex for an under-\$20 Merlot, and could even gain with a year or two in the cellar. It's dry and smooth in tannins, with delicious cherry, tobacco, spice and sweet oak flavors. —S.H.  
**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$19

**87 Brander 2009 Merlot (Santa Ynez Valley).** Lots of rich flavor in this smooth Merlot. It's filled with sweet raspberries, cherries, cola and cocoa, and finishes spicy in cinnamon and anise. Drink now. —S.H.  
**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$22

**87 Franciscan 2008 Merlot (Napa Valley).** For full review see page 10.  
**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$21

**86 Ballentine 2008 Pocal Vineyard Merlot (Napa Valley).** Tough and gritty for a Merlot, with sweet and sour cherry and blackberry flavors wrapped into stringy tannins. With its briary, peppery finish, it could almost be a Zinfandel. —S.H.  
**abv:** 14.8% **Price:** \$24

**86 Courtney Benham 2009 Merlot (Napa Valley).** Easy to like this softly appealing Merlot. It's a gentle wine, with a silky texture, and has candied flavors of cherries and raspberries. Pretty good price for a nice Napa Merlot. —S.H.  
**abv:** 13.9% **Price:** \$18

**86 Greystone 2009 Merlot (California).** Softly delicate and dry, this affordable Merlot has lots of charm. It's a smooth, medium-bodied wine with pleasant cherry, cola, pepper and sandalwood flavors. Good job. **Best Buy.** —S.H.  
**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$11

**86 Marilyn 2009 Silver Anniversary Merlot (Napa Valley).** For full review see page 11.  
**abv:** 13.9% **Price:** \$30

**86 Peju 2008 Merlot (Napa Valley).** Peju's Merlots have been inconsistent. When they're good, they're quite good, but you never know. This 2008, from a less successful vintage, is all right. It's dry and tannic and soft in cherry and tobacco flavors. But there's not a lot going on. Drink up. —S.H.  
**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$35

**86 Twomey 2007 Merlot (Napa Valley).** Nice and dry, with a good bite of firm tannins, but it's a little flat in the flavor profile. Shows decent cherry, berry, herb and cedar flavors that could be more vibrant and complex. But it is elegantly structured. —S.H.  
**abv:** 13.9% **Price:** \$50

**85 Trentadue 2009 Block 500 Estate Merlot (Alexander Valley).** Heavy and oaky, with a

full-bodied, soft mouthfeel. But it's rich and sweet in cherries, blackberries, plums, mocha and spices. Pretty good price for a nice, everyday Merlot. —S.H.  
**abv:** 14.3% **Price:** \$15

**84 Martorana 2007 Merlot (Dry Creek Valley).** Softly simple and sweet in cherry and oak flavors, this Merlot is good, but doesn't leave much to the imagination. Drink it now with burgers or beef tacos. —S.H.  
**abv:** 15% **Price:** \$33

**81 Carmenet 2008 Vintner's Collection Reserve Merlot (California).** Acidic and thin, with watery flavors of blackberry tea. Feels rugged and harsh in the mouth and is hard to like at any price. —S.H.  
**abv:** 12.5% **Price:** \$12

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## CABERNET FRANC

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**92 Lang & Reed 2008 Two-Fourteen Cabernet Franc (Napa Valley).** For full review see page 5.  
**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$40

**89 Peju 2007 Reserve Cabernet Franc (Rutherford).** Spicier than most Cab Francs, with a scour of pepper, but lush and flavorful in red cherries, tobacco and sandalwood. Easy to drink, this fine red wine has lots of interest. Drink now. —S.H.  
**abv:** 14.8% **Price:** \$95

**87 Lang & Reed 2009 Cabernet Franc (North Coast).** This soft, juicy Cab Franc is fine for drinking now with a nice steak. It's almost sweet in cherry, tobacco and green herb flavors, with a pretty touch of oak and gentle tannins. —S.H.  
**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$24

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## BARBERA

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**90 Uvaggio 2008 Barbera (Lodi).** If only more California Barbera could be like this. Opening with a pretty, yet rich fruit nose of dark cherry and plum, the structured wine has been tamed into a soft, chocolate-brushed finish with just the perfect amount of acidity. The vines have been in the ground since the 1880s. Winemaker Jim Moore adds just a thimble's worth (3%) of Nebbiolo too, before letting it all age in oak. —V.B.  
**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$20

**89 Hovey 2009 Walker Cuvee Barbera (El Dorado).** On the bigger, beastlier side of Barbera, grown from a one-acre plot in the El Dorado hills, this wine'll take some time to unveil itself—5 to 6 years—but already shows licorice, black cherry and oakiness that's bound to resolve itself with age. Incredibly juicy and good now, the acidity's still a bit tight. **Cellar Selection.** —V.B.  
**abv:** 15.5% **Price:** \$22

**88 Rosa d'Oro 2009 Barbera (Clear Lake).** A deep, dark, robust Lake County Barbera, tame by Barbera standards, with softened tannins but lots of black licorice, fruit—rustic plum, mostly—and a hint

of baked bread. Worth a try with meaty pasta dishes. —V.B.  
**abv:** 13.8% **Price:** \$20

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## PETITE SIRAH

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**90 Truett Hurst 2009 Burning Man Petite Sirah (Dry Creek Valley).** Classic Petite Sirah in its own brawny, briary way. It's full-bodied and drily tannic, with strong flavors of wild berries, tobacco, Canadian bacon, crushed pepper and toast. The depth of these flavors is considerable, as is the long, spicy finish. Should glide effortlessly through the next eight years. —S.H.  
**abv:** 13.7% **Price:** \$33

**89 Nottingham Cellars 2009 Casa De Vinas, Reserve Petite Sirah (Livermore Valley).** Winemaker Collin Cranor is superexcited about Casa De Vinas, a vineyard much talked about in the Livermore Valley. His Petite Sirah is clearly not petite, but everything PS lovers will love: oaky, dark and ripe, with smoke, chocolate and textured tannins. —V.B.  
**abv:** NA **Price:** \$40

**88 Cameron Hughes 2009 Lot 229 Petite Sirah (Napa Valley).** Plenty of sleek character in this well-grown Napa Petite Sirah. Shows lots of class and balance for a variety that can be hard to control. Likeable for its array of fresh, ripe berry, cherry, currant, bacon and spice flavors, and the smoothness of its tannins. —S.H.  
**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$15

**85 Cameron Hughes 2009 Lot 252 Petite Sirah (North Coast).** Rugged and tannic, this dry red wine can best be described as rustic. But at this price, it's just fine, offering berry, herb and spice flavors that finish clean. —S.H.  
**abv:** 14.1% **Price:** \$12

**85 La Storia by Trentadue 2009 Estate Petite Sirah (Alexander Valley).** A little too sweet and soft. Tastes almost like a melted chocolate, red cherry and anise dessert. The finish is hot, too, making this wine pretty rustic. But it sure is delicious. —S.H.  
**abv:** 14.9% **Price:** \$25

**84 Courtney Benham 2009 Petite Sirah (Alexander Valley).** Sharp, jammy in raspberry and pink bubblegum flavors and rather gassy, like a young Beaujolais. An easy, country-style wine that will pair especially well with salted meats, like sausages. —S.H.  
**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$15

**81 Jettlynn 2007 Estate Petite Sirah (Paso Robles).** Too many overripe, sunburnt flavors in this tannic wine. It smells like Port and tastes hot and baked. The alcohol is 15.9%. —S.H.  
**abv:** 15.9% **Price:** \$20

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## PINOT NOIR

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**93 MacPhail 2009 Toulouse Vineyard Pinot Noir (Anderson Valley).** MacPhail has shown steady improvement working with this vineyard, which



seems to require a cool year like 2009 to succeed. The wine is quite light in body and color, but the flavors really penetrate and sink in deep. They range from red cherries and cola to red licorice, bacon and spices, with a deft touch of oak. Dry and crisp in acidity, it should provide fascinating drinking over the next seven years. —S.H.

abv: 14.3%

Price: \$49

**93 MacPhail 2009 Wightman House Vineyard Pinot Noir (Anderson Valley).** Mouth-filling and rich, in the MacPhail style, a Pinot whose flavors never stop working. Shows intensely ripe red cherry, raspberry, cola and red plum fruit, with delicious vanilla and toast notes from oak. Yet the wine feels light and silky. Combines an ease of drinking with the complexity you want from a great Anderson Valley Pinot Noir. —S.H.

abv: 14.3%

Price: \$55

**93 Roessler 2009 Hein Family Vineyard Pinot Noir (Anderson Valley).** A lovely Pinot Noir, delicious and sweet in fruit. You'll find a glyceriney fatness to it, courtesy of high alcohol, as well as sweet, smoky oak. The underlying flavors are wonderfully ripe in raspberries and cherries, and are brightened with fine acidity. —S.H.

abv: 15%

Price: \$46

**93 Signorello 2009 Las Amigas Vineyard Pinot Noir (Carneros).** The last few vintages have been successful for this bottling, after some erratic years. This '09 is drier and earthier than many expensive California Pinot Noirs, but that makes it distinctive. It has rich flavors of cherries, cola, mushrooms, leather and dusty Indian spices. Drink now–2015. —S.H.

abv: 14.8%

Price: \$50

**92 Belle Glos 2009 Clark & Telephone Vineyard Pinot Noir (Santa Maria Valley).** Delicious from the get go, a Pinot Noir that impresses for sheer flamboyance. The vineyard is in a cooler part of the Santa Maria Valley, and the wine shows fine acidity and ripe, long hangtime flavors of raspberries and cherries, with a rich coating of oak and the exotic crushed spices of its terroir. So good now, it's hard to resist, but try cellaring for up to five years. —S.H.

abv: 14.4%

Price: \$44

**92 Belle Glos 2009 Las Alturas Vineyard Pinot Noir (Santa Lucia Highlands).** For full review see page 5. *Cellar Selection.*

abv: 14.7%

Price: \$44

**92 Heintz 2009 Pinot Noir (Sonoma Coast).** The most notable thing about this Pinot is the acidity. It's brighter and crisper than almost any other Pinot out there. Almost as noteworthy are the raspberry, cranberry and licorice flavors, so spicy and pure. Such an interesting wine, and one that could develop bottle complexities over the next six years. —S.H.

abv: 14.5%

Price: \$39

**92 Isabel Mondavi 2009 Estate Pinot Noir (Carneros).** Even though this Pinot Noir is instantly likeable for satisfying richness, it has some nuances. Flatters right off the bat with a soft texture hous-

ing lush raspberry and cherry pie filling, cola and sandalwood flavors that are easy to appreciate. But there are interesting mineral complexities. Drink soon. —S.H.

abv: 14.4%

Price: \$36

**92 Waits-Mast 2009 La Encantada Vineyard Pinot Noir (Sta. Rita Hills).** Ripe fruit, in the form of raspberries, cherries and figs, characterizes this luscious Pinot. But it has much more going for it than that. The tannins are rich and complex, the finish is dry and spicy, and the overall impression is of wine with a great pedigree. Drink over the next six years. —S.H.

abv: 14.3%

Price: \$47

**91 Belle Glos 2009 Taylor Lane Vineyard Pinot Noir (Sonoma Coast).** Few California Pinot Noirs gets riper or richer than this. It's marked by massive fruit flavors, namely of raspberries and cherries, as well as earthier notes of sautéed mushrooms, cola and tobacco. Very delicious, if a little too soft for comfort. Drink now with mushroom risotto and lamb for a glamorous combo. —S.H.

abv: 14.5%

Price: \$44

**91 De Coelo 2009 Terra Neuma Vineyard Pinot Noir (Sonoma Coast).** An interesting and even a bold wine that will challenge diehard California Pinot lovers. The wine is quite low in alcohol and exceptionally silky and light in the mouth, with an elegant feeling. It's strongly extracted in raspberry fruit, and has lots of sharp, zingy acidity. Doesn't feel knit together at all, but could be a sleeper. Try aging until 2015. *Cellar Selection.* —S.H.

abv: 13%

Price: \$69

**91 Jeriko 2010 Pommard Clone Pinot Noir (Mendocino).** For full review see page 6.

abv: 13.9%

Price: \$64

**91 Kendric 2008 Pinot Noir (Marin County).** Kendric produces very pure, refined Pinot Noirs from this county just over the Golden Gate Bridge. The '08 is classic, a pale amber-colored wine, rich in acidity and minerals, framing red cherry, cola and bacon flavors. Gets better as it warms in the glass. —S.H.

abv: 13.5%

Price: \$35

**90 Dierberg 2008 Pinot Noir (Santa Maria Valley).** For full review see page 8.

abv: 14.1%

Price: \$42

**90 Evolve 2010 Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley).** Classic Russian River Pinot Noir, dry and silky and tart with acids. It's delicious in sour cherry candy, persimmon and sandalwood flavors, with a long, spicy finish. Not an ager, but lovely for drinking now with steak, tuna, salmon, lamb. —S.H.

abv: 14.4%

Price: \$30

**90 Healdsburg Ranches 2010 Appellation Series Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley).**

A lovely Pinot Noir, bone dry and crisp, perfect for pairing with a huge array of foods. It has subtle flavors of cherries, tobacco and white pepper. —S.H.

abv: 13.7%

Price: \$25

**90 Jeriko 2010 Dijon Clone Pinot Noir (Mendocino).** For full review see page 8.

abv: 14.5%

Price: \$48

**90 La Fenêtre 2009 Pinot Noir (Santa Maria Valley).** A complex Pinot Noir, very dry and crisp in the Santa Maria style, with flavors of crushed Indian spices, cola, orange zest and sandalwood. Shows lots of elegance, a sophisticated wine that requires some understanding to appreciate. —S.H.

abv: 13.5%

Price: \$30

**90 Waits-Mast 2009 Amber Ridge Vineyard Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley).** A classic coastal California Pinot, dry, silky and complex. So easy to like, gliding across the palate with raspberry, cherry, Canadian bacon and smoky sandalwood flavors that are filled with umami richness. Best over the next four years. —S.H.

abv: 14.8%

Price: \$42

**90 Waits-Mast 2009 Deer Meadows Vineyard Pinot Noir (Anderson Valley).** Easy to drink now because it's so rich and sweet in fruit and oak. Raspberries, cherries, vanilla, cinnamon spice and sandalwood wash over the palate, just delicious. Seems too sweet and accessible to age, so drink over the next three years. —S.H.

abv: 14.2%

Price: \$47

**90 Waits-Mast 2009 Hayley Vineyard Pinot Noir (Anderson Valley).** Delivers plenty of rich Pinot flavor from the great Anderson Valley of Mendocino County. Raspberries, cherries, pomegranates, Dr. Pepper cola, spices and sandalwood flood the mouth, wrapped into a silky texture. Nice now, although it could develop bottle complexity over the next 3–4 years. —S.H.

abv: 14.6%

Price: \$36

**89 De Coelo 2009 Quintus Vineyard Pinot Noir (Sonoma Coast).** Lots to like in this dry, silky Pinot Noir. Easy to imagine drinking it with a nice steak with mushrooms. It's rich in cherry, cola, mushroom and beef teriaki flavors. A little soft, and not an ager, but fine now. —S.H.

abv: 13%

Price: \$75

**89 HKG 2009 Bridge Selection Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley).** A delicious Pinot Noir, made in the light, forward style that's so popular today. Drink it now for the silky lushness of the raspberry and cherry jam, sweet toasted oak and cinnamon spice flavors. —S.H.

abv: 13.9%

Price: \$38

**89 MacPhail 2009 Vagon Rouge Pinot Noir (Anderson Valley).** This is a barrel selection from the winery's various lots. As rich as it is, it's not really showing all that well now, starring acidity and fresh, jammy raspberry, cherry and cola flavors, liberally oaked. Give it a good decant, but the gamble is ageability. Try after 2015 if you dare. —S.H.

abv: 14.3%

Price: \$59

**89 On Point 2009 Pinot Noir (North Coast).** Lots of fruity richness in this Pinot. Brims with ripe raspberry and cherry jam flavors, with oaky over-

tones of buttered cinnamon toast. The alcohol is nice and moderate. Drink over the next four years. —S.H.  
abv: 13.9% Price: \$34

**88 Benziger 2009 Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley).** A delicious Pinot Noir, a bit one-dimensional, but that dimension is a gorgeous one to explore. It's all about flavor, in the way of raspberry and cherry pie filling, vanilla, cinnamon spice, buttered toast and sandalwood. Defines the easy style of well-grown coastal Pinot. —S.H.  
abv: 14.5% Price: \$28

**88 De Loach 2009 Masut Vineyard Pinot Noir (Mendocino County).** A great vintage in Mendocino and a great vineyard, Masut, but lovers of subtle Pinot will be disappointed with this big-bodied, in no ways shy wine (15.5% alcohol), its positive attributes being great texture and dark cherry, cinnamon and almost baked rhubarb pie aromas and flavors. —V.B.  
abv: 15.5% Price: \$45

**88 Jeriko 2010 Reserve Pinot Noir (Mendocino).** For full review see page 10.  
abv: 14.7% Price: \$38

**88 Landy Family Vineyards 2009 Estate Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley).** Classically ripe Russian River Pinot Noir, sweet and jammy in raspberries and cherries. Fortunately, fine tannins and acidity provide balance. It's a bit too sweet and rich in fruit, lacking some complexity, but fine for drinking now. —S.H.  
abv: 14.8% Price: \$46

**88 Pfendler 2009 Pinot Noir (Sonoma Coast).** An example of a soft, accessible Pinot whose rich, ripe flavors are the main attraction. Brims with cola, cherry, cranberry and red licorice flavors. Seems best over the next 2–3 years. —S.H.  
abv: 14.5% Price: \$45

**88 Signaterra 2009 Bella Luna Vineyard Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley).** Made in a sweetly ripe, oaky manner, this is a drink-me-now Pinot Noir. Easy to like for its jammy raspberry, cherry and Dr. Pepper cola flavors. The acidity and soft tannins define the modern Russian River style. —S.H.  
abv: 13.8% Price: \$49

**88 Trione 2008 River Road Ranch Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley).** This Pinot certainly has lots of concentrated fruit, with an intensity of cherry and raspberry jam, pomegranates and cola. It's also well oaked, to judge from the strong layer of buttered cinnamon toast. Feels strong and indelicate now, with a punch of acidity, but could mellow over the next 2–3 years. —S.H.  
abv: 14.2% Price: \$35

**87 Bernardus 2009 Pinot Noir (Santa Lucia Highlands).** Deliciously rich and extracted in jammy raspberry, cherry and cola fruit, with lots of sweet oak adding vanilla and buttered toast. Could use greater depth, though, as it's a little one-dimensional. Drink now. —S.H.  
abv: 14.7% Price: \$30

**87 Fog Crest 2009 Estate Bottled Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley).** Sweet and delicious, like a cherry and raspberry granola candy bar, with toasted almonds, brown sugar and cinnamon flavors. There's fine acidity and an exotic spiciness. Drink now. —S.H.  
abv: 14.7% Price: \$49

**87 La Fenêtre 2009 Pinot Noir (Central Coast).** Good Pinot character, but dry and unyielding. If you search for richness, you'll find a core of raspberries and cherries. Die-hard Burgundians will like the earthy, subtle complexities. Drink now. —S.H.  
abv: 14% Price: \$20

**87 Martin Ray 2010 Reserve Pinot Noir (Los Carneros).** On the plus side, this Pinot is dry and lightly silky, and shows spicy cherry, rosehip tea, cola and sandalwood flavors. It's not the most complicated wine ever, but a nice, clean wine to drink now. —S.H.  
abv: 14.6% Price: \$30

**87 Sebastiani 2009 Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley).** Shows a lovely Pinot Noir texture, feeling silky smooth and light in the mouth, with a nice scour of acidity. The raspberry and cola flavors are a little simple, but tasty. —S.H.  
abv: 14.2% Price: \$30

**87 Signaterra 2009 San Remo Vineyard Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley).** There sure is a lot of ripe flavor in this Pinot, which swamps the tastebuds with raspberries, cherries, vanilla and sweet oak. It's basically a dry wine, with smooth tannins, but it is deficient in acidity. That steals some liveliness, and makes the richness taste flat. —S.H.  
abv: 14.5% Price: \$49

**87 Three Sticks 2008 Durell Vineyard Pinot Noir (Sonoma Coast).** Lots of raspberry, cherry, vanilla and new oak richness in this Pinot Noir, and it's dry and silky. Would score higher except for intrusive acidity that cuts through the mouth like a scalpel. That makes it unbalanced, even though it's delicious. —S.H.  
abv: 14.7% Price: \$55

**87 Wattle Creek 2009 Pinot Noir (Yorkville Highlands).** A bit common and rugged, with gentle tannins and sweet, jammy raspberry and cherry fruit. Hard to say if it has a future, so keep trying it over the next three years. —S.H.  
abv: 14.5% Price: \$38

**87 Wrath 2009 Tondré Grapefield Pinot Noir (Santa Lucia Highlands).** "Rich" doesn't even begin to describe this Pinot. The fruit is front and center, blasting off with raspberries and cherries imposingly rich and sweet. Flavor is the star, at the cost of complexity. Drink now. —S.H.  
abv: 14.4% Price: \$39

**86 Fog Crest 2009 Laguna West Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley).** Deliciously ripe in raspberries, cherries and plums, with an exotic coating of sweetly caramelized oak. The texture is fine and silky, but ultimately the wine is too sweet and simple. —S.H.  
abv: 14.5% Price: \$39

**86 Mark West 2009 Appellation Series Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley).** This is a soft, simple wine. Although it has an attractive silkiness and savory raspberry, cola and cinnamon flavors, it's a little one-dimensional, so drink up. —S.H.  
abv: 14.2% Price: \$25

**86 Wrath 2009 115/667 Pinot Noir (Monterey).** Fruity richness stars in this rather direct Pinot Noir. It explodes in the mouth with ripe flavors of raspberries and cherries, with a caramel sweet coating of oak. Tastes like a honey-nut granola bar. —S.H.  
abv: 14.8% Price: \$35

**86 Wrath 2009 Ex Anima Pinot Noir (Monterey).** Sweet and oaky, with one-dimensional raspberry, cherry and Dr. Pepper cola flavors. Rich enough, but would benefit from greater complexity and dryness. Drink now. —S.H.  
abv: 12.9% Price: \$29

**86 Wrath 2009 Ex Vite Pinot Noir (Monterey).** This is a honey sweet Pinot Noir that can almost be a dessert wine. It's soft and very fruity, with jammy flavors of cherries, raspberries, vanilla, buttered toast and butterscotch. Drink it now. —S.H.  
abv: 14.3% Price: \$38

**86 Wrath 2009 San Saba Vineyard Pinot Noir (Monterey).** There's a smokiness to this wine that may be due to well-charred barrels, but it also has a baked, cooked taste, like the raisins got sunburned. Below that you'll find ripe raspberry, cherry and cola flavors. —S.H.  
abv: 14.8% Price: \$49

**85 Block Nine 2010 Caiden's Vineyards Pinot Noir (California).** Not bad for the price. It's thin and silky in mouthfeel and dry, with decent raspberry, cola and mint flavors. —S.H.  
abv: 13.1% Price: \$13

**85 Cameron Hughes 2009 Lot 276 Pinot Noir (Los Carneros).** The price is fine, but with Pinot Noir, you get what you pay for. The wine is dry, silky and crisp in acidity, yet tastes rather green in mint and cherry flavors. —S.H.  
abv: 14.2% Price: \$15

**85 Mark West 2009 Pinot Noir (Santa Lucia Highlands).** A sweet, jammy Pinot Noir, with raspberry, cherry, licorice and sandalwood flavors, brightened by crisp acidity. Good as an introductory Pinot to explore the variety at a fair price. —S.H.  
abv: 14.2% Price: \$15

**84 Bogle 2009 Pinot Noir (California).** A little sweet and simple, but for the price, a good approximation of Pinot Noir. It's rich in raspberry and cherry jam flavor. —S.H.  
abv: 14.2% Price: \$11

**84 Cameron Hughes 2009 Lot 265 Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley).** A standard-issue Pinot Noir, dry and silky in the mouth, with light flavors of strawberries, cola, mint and sandalwood. Will get by with a nice piece of grilled salmon. —S.H.  
abv: 14.4% Price: \$18

**83 Arroba 2008 Merlot (Edna Valley).** Dry, sharp in acidity and rather green, a tough Merlot to love despite some decent cherry and spice flavors. —S.H.

abv: 13.5%

Price: \$20

**83 Carmenet 2009 Vintner's Collection Reserve Pinot Noir (California).** Pinot by the numbers. It's dry and silky, with decent cherry and spice flavors that finish a little green and minty. —S.H.

abv: 12.5%

Price: \$12

**83 Castle Rock 2010 Pinot Noir (Mendocino County).** Not sure nature intended for 80,000 cases of Pinot Noir ever to be made but this Pinot—from Mendocino County no less, where the grapes so often shine bright—is syrupy like thick cherry jam with nothing much varietal about it. —V.B.

abv: 13.5%

Price: \$13

**82 Mark West 2009 Pinot Noir (California).** Pinot Noir in name only, a dry, silky wine whose berry flavors are definitely on the thin side. It's somewhat sweet. —S.H.

abv: 13.8%

Price: \$12

**82 Seven Daughters NV Pinot Noir (California).** Tough in acidity, with a harsh mouthfeel only partially relieved by cherry, berry and toasted oak flavors. It's hard to like, even at this price. —S.H.

abv: 13.8%

Price: \$15

**80 Backhouse 2010 Pinot Noir (California).** Barely drinkable, although you'll get by at big parties where nobody cares. It's silky, sweet and minty. —S.H.

abv: 12.5%

Price: \$7

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## SYRAH

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**93 MacRostie 2007 Wildcat Mountain Vineyard Syrah (Sonoma Coast).** Another successful Syrah from this great vineyard, in the upper Carneros section that qualifies as Sonoma Coast, and that also produces great Pinot Noirs and Chardonnays for MacRostie. This '07 Syrah, held back four years, still is somewhat tight and tannic, but extraordinarily rich and spicy. Drink now, or over the next six years. —S.H.

abv: 14.3%

Price: \$34

**92 Eponymous 2009 Syrah (Napa Valley).** A lush, smooth and frankly delicious Syrah that exhibits the only-in-California style. Fruit doesn't get much riper than this bottle of blueberries and chocolate. But with finely ground tannins and good acidity, it has proper structure. Drink over the next two years for freshness. —S.H.

abv: 14.4%

Price: \$36

**88 Dunning Vineyards 2008 Private Reserve Syrah (Paso Robles).** Lots of varietal character in this Syrah, with its peppery flavors of blackberries, currants, anise and teriaki beef. There's a little heat from alcohol. Drink now. —S.H.

abv: 15.2%

Price: \$35

**88 Trione 2007 River Road Ranch Syrah (Russian River Valley).** Here's a flashy Syrah for drinking now. It does what California does so well, showing rich, sweet raspberry and cherry fruit, chocolate and white pepper flavors, generously oaked, and housed in ripely soft, complex tannins. —S.H.

abv: 14.9%

Price: \$32

**88 Wrath 2010 Ex Anima Syrah (Monterey).** Very strongly flavored, and needs a salty cut of meat to tame its powers. Explodes with jammy blackberries, blueberries, cherries and raspberries, with a monster blast of black pepper. Bring on the sausages. —S.H.

abv: 14.7%

Price: \$25

**88 Wrath 2009 Cerberus Syrah (Monterey).** Ripe fruit explodes in this wine, which swamps the mouth with crushed, jammy blackberries, cherries and raspberries. Oak adds sweet buttered toast and smoke, but it's the fruit that really stars. —S.H.

abv: 14.5%

Price: \$39

**87 Adelaida 2008 Anna's Estate Vineyard Syrah (Paso Robles).** Strong in flavor and smooth in the mouth, this soft, juicy Syrah is like velvet made of blackberries, blueberries and chocolate. It is, in a word, delicious, and while it's somewhat sweet, the acidity and minerality balance it. —S.H.

abv: 14.5%

Price: \$28

**87 Cameron Hughes 2009 Lot 224 Syrah (High Valley).** For full review see page 13.

*Best Buy.*

abv: 14.9%

Price: \$12

**87 Hall 2008 Darwin Syrah (Napa Valley).** A pretty good Syrah, although there's something generic about it. Rich and soft, it has black cherry, blueberry, milk chocolate and bacon flavors, and the tannins are silky. Drink this sweetly fruity wine now. —S.H.

abv: 14.9%

Price: \$40

**87 Heintz 2009 Syrah (Sonoma Coast).** Lots of zesty acidity in this Syrah. Maybe too much, as it's so tart, it distracts attention from the flavors. But what flavors they are. Dramatic in blackberries, cherries, currants, cola and bacon, accented with sweetly toasted oak. You can try aging it, but the acidity seems to rule that out. —S.H.

abv: 14.5%

Price: \$36

**87 Martin Ranch 2008 Thérèse Vineyards Lester Family Vineyards Syrah (Santa Cruz Mountains).** A good wine, layered and complex, although it's rude now in youthful brashness. Acidity and jam mark the cherry and blackberry flavors. They lack nuance, but three or four years in the cellar should help. —S.H.

abv: 15%

Price: \$35

**87 Signorello 2009 Estate Grown and Bottled Syrah (Napa Valley).** Supperripe fruit marks this delicious Syrah. It bursts with raspberry, cherry, chocolate and bacon flavors. The tannins are as rich as Napa gets, but very soft and melted. It's made at

the upper tier level of the modern style of instant appeal. —S.H.

abv: 14.1%

Price: \$42

**87 Valley of the Moon 2009 Syrah (Sonoma County).** Here's a good, everyday red wine, from a winery that specializes in value. It's full-bodied and rich in black cherry, bacon and pepper flavors that go down soft and easy. —S.H.

abv: 14.5%

Price: \$16

**86 Bearboat 2008 Syrah (Russian River Valley).** An easy, gentle red wine, full-bodied and spicy, with extravagantly ripe cherry and blackberry flavors. Pretty good, but lacks those extra layers of complexity, so drink now. —S.H.

abv: 14.3%

Price: \$17

**85 Broll Mountain Vineyards 2006 Syrah (Calaveras County).** A mouthful of extreme black fruit and licorice is at the heart of this Foothills Syrah, a power hitter with not one shy bone in its body. —V.B.

abv: 15%

Price: \$20

**85 Peju 2008 Syrah (Napa Valley).** Sweet and soft, with mocha, cherry and spice flavors, like a Starbucks drink. The alcohol level is high and hot. Easy to drink, but not going anywhere. —S.H.

abv: 15.2%

Price: \$32

**84 Cass 2008 Estate Grown Syrah (Paso Robles).** A hard wine to like, especially at this price, despite some decent fruit. After the vegetal smell blows off, it turns simple and soft, with acidic blackberry flavors and a spicy finish. —S.H.

abv: 15.5%

Price: \$42

**83 Big House 2009 The Slammer Syrah (Central Coast).** A soft, common wine, sweet in raspberry jam flavors. Easy to serve at parties with tasty little appetizers. —S.H.

abv: 13.5%

Price: \$10

**82 Fallbrook 2009 33 Degrees North Gracie Hill Vineyard Syrah (South Coast).** This estate-grown 100% Syrah is sour and inelegant on its own but would have worked nicely in a blend where it could have provided meaty structure. —V.B.

abv: 14.2%

Price: \$33

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## ZINFANDEL

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**95 Ravenswood 2008 Old Hill Zinfandel (Sonoma Valley).** A tremendous Zinfandel, Ravenswood's most expensive, and while you might quiver at the price, it's easily a very great wine. This is Zinfandel on steroids, a monster of wild summer berry, tobacco, currant and spice flavors, wrapped into significantly thick tannins. Yet despite the power, it never quite loses elegance and balance. The winery's 2007 was their greatest Zinfandel ever, and this one isn't far behind. —S.H.

abv: 15%

Price: \$60

**93 Ravenswood 2008 Barricia Zinfandel (Sonoma Valley).** Zinfandel's briary, bram-



## **BUYING**guide

bly personality is front and center on this wine, which wears its slightly rustic cloak proudly. It's the quintessential California Zin, dry, complex and peppery, offering a profusion of wild summer berry, licorice and tobacco flavors. One of the great successes of the vintage. —S.H.

**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$35

**92 Ravenswood 2008 Dickerson Zinfandel (Napa Valley).** An interesting wine that grows more complex as it sits and warms in the glass. The vineyard long has been source to one of Ravenswood's best Zinfandels, and the 2007 was really great. This '08 is a tad less complex, but shows classic Zinfandel character, with wild berry, tobacco and pepper spice notes, as well as a rocky minerality. It should age for a very long time, although the point score is unlikely to change. —S.H.

**abv:** 14.8% **Price:** \$35

**91 Kenwood 2009 Jack London Vineyard Zinfandel (Sonoma Valley).** For full review see page 6. *Editors' Choice.*

**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$20

**90 Ravenswood 2008 Belloni Zinfandel (Russian River Valley).** Imagine the soft, smooth texture of a fine Merlot. Then combine it with the briary, peppery flavors of a Sonoma Zinfandel. That's what you get in this dry, complex young wine. It's a classic Zinfandel that, despite high alcohol, doesn't feel hot. —S.H.

**abv:** 15% **Price:** \$35

**90 Ravenswood 2008 Teldeschi Zinfandel (Dry Creek Valley).** There's nothing subtle about this Zin. It's rich and ripe in fruit and spices, flooding the mouth with wild, briary blackberry and mulberry flavors. Drink this exuberant young wine with spicy meats. The world's greatest hamburger or cheeseburger would not be out of place. —S.H.

**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$35

**89 Truett Hurst 2009 Red Rooster Zinfandel (Dry Creek Valley).** A luscious Zin, much better than the winery's '08. Made from old vineyards in the valley, it shows classic Dry Creek character, with firm tannins framing flavors of wild berries, dried red currants, pepper and sweet sandalwood. The alcohol is very high, if you're sensitive to that. —S.H.

**abv:** 15.9% **Price:** \$29

**88 Dutcher Crossing 2009 Bernier-Sibary Vineyard Zinfandel (Dry Creek Valley).** Oak dominates this Zin-based blend, which contains Petite Sirah, Carignane and Mataro (Mourvèdre). The underlying wine is as rich as the very fine 2008, with berry, cherry, currant, leather and spice flavors. But sweet, caramelized oak rules, to the wine's detriment. —S.H.

**abv:** 14.8% **Price:** \$39

**88 Four Vines 2009 Maverick Zinfandel (Amador County).** A great value Zin from Amador. It's a briary, meaty, mountain version of America's grape with plenty of pepper to please. Grab a slab of ribs for this one. —V.B.

**abv:** 14.8% **Price:** \$15

**88 Ridge 2009 York Creek Zinfandel (Napa Valley).** A good, dry Zinfandel, although it's a little overripe in prunes. Not too much, though, so don't be alarmed. It's very spicy, suggesting drinking with equally spicy foods, like spice-rubbed beef, pork and chicken, grilled to perfection. Nice restaurant wine due to its elegance. —S.H.

**abv:** 14.7% **Price:** \$30

**88 Truett Hurst 2009 Rattler Rock Zinfandel (Dry Creek Valley).** Classic Dry Creek Zinfandel, dry and brawny and high in alcohol. Pair the wild blackberry, nettle, anise and pepper flavors with a spice-rubbed, smoky grilled steak. —S.H.

**abv:** 15.8% **Price:** \$29

**87 Cameron Hughes 2009 Lot 243 Zinfandel (Sonoma County).** Here's a robust, lusty young Zinfandel, brimming with briary, fresh fruity flavors of wild raspberries and cherries, liberally spiced and smoothly tannic. Good price for such a Zin to drink with roasts and barbecue. —S.H.

**abv:** 16.5% **Price:** \$13

**87 Four Vines 2009 Biker Zinfandel (Paso Robles).** The alcohol is a little high on this Zin, giving it some burn. But it's very smooth and velvety in texture, with complex, pleasing wild berry, anise, pepper and sandalwood flavors. Classic Paso Zin for drinking with roasted or grilled meats and poultry. —S.H.

**abv:** 15% **Price:** \$20

**87 Four Vines 2009 The Sophisticate Zinfandel (Sonoma County).** With a soft, silky mouthfeel and a great big burst of black pepper, this is a classic Sonoma Zin. It's ripe in blackberries and currants, with a briary taste of anise and wild chamomile. Good now with barbecue. —S.H.

**abv:** 14.8% **Price:** \$20

**87 Frog's Leap 2009 Zinfandel (Napa Valley).** If you can get past the acidity, which is pretty fierce, this is a fine, fresh Zinfandel. It's bone dry and rich in wild berries, currants, anise, thyme and black pepper. The tannins are dense, and need rich meats and cheeses. —S.H.

**abv:** 13.6% **Price:** \$27

**87 Klinker Brick Winery 2009 Old Vine Zinfandel (Lodi).** No mistaking the American oak that's been wrapped around this wine, lending a fennel sweetness to its otherwise juicy red fruit. The 15.8% alcohol is also quite, shall we say, present. —V.B.

**abv:** 15.8% **Price:** \$18

**87 Rock Wall 2009 Live Oak Vineyard Zinfandel (Contra Costa County).** A very herbal Zin from a five-acre Oakley plot, funky and stewy at first, then rich, full-bodied with a lot of caramel and toffee going on. A great deal at \$16 for big Zin lovers. —V.B.

**abv:** 15.7% **Price:** \$16

**86 OZV 2008 Old Vine Zinfandel (Lodi).** A strongly briary old vine Zin from Lodi that's strangely restrained, with a taste of just-ripe blackberries that delves into bacon fat and mocha before falling off a tad at the finish. Decent volume and body on this

wine, which is priced fairly and probably fairly easy to find. —V.B.

**abv:** 13.95% **Price:** \$15

**86 Pezzi King 2009 Old Vines Zinfandel (Dry Creek Valley).** So sweet in ripe fruit, high alcohol and oak, it's almost a dessert wine. Tastes like the liquid equivalent of a melted raspberry, cherry, roasted almond, vanilla and cinnamon candy bar. —S.H.

**abv:** 15.9% **Price:** \$24

**86 Ridge 2009 Pagani Ranch Zinfandel (Sonoma Valley).** Tastes too sweet by far, with sugared black cherry, currant, prune and tobacco flavors. The sweetness may be partially attributed to high alcohol. With thick tannins, this Zin is just too rustic to merit a higher score. —S.H.

**abv:** 15% **Price:** \$35

**85 Pezzi King 2009 Zinfandel (Dry Creek Valley).** Sugary sweet and soft, with jammy raspberry, cherry, mocha, vanilla, cinnamon, clove and pepper flavors. It's a country-style Zin made for washing down barbecue. —S.H.

**abv:** 15.8% **Price:** \$18

**85 Ravenswood 2008 Big River Zinfandel (Alexander Valley).** Pretty good, but marred by some vegetal flavors, like asparagus. The tannins are rich and smooth, and the finish is dry and a little hot. —S.H.

**abv:** 14.9% **Price:** \$35

**85 Trentadue 2009 Estate Zinfandel (Alexander Valley).** With some heat from alcohol, this is a fruity, peppery Zin, brawny and bold. All it wants is simple fare, like cheeseburgers, lasagna, spaghetti with meatballs or a beef tamale. —S.H.

**abv:** 14.8% **Price:** \$15

**84 Castle Rock 2009 Zinfandel (Mendocino County).** With vanilla, red fruit and saffras showing up at first in this wine, this Mendocino Zin, moderate in alcohol and tannin, doesn't taste quite finished, its ending bland and a bit sweet. —V.B.

**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$12

**84 Chronic Cellars 2009 Dead Nuts Zinfandel (Paso Robles).** This is a high alcohol, hot, spicy wine. With Porty, sweet flavors of raisins and blackberry jam, it's a natural for barbecue. —S.H.

**abv:** 15.3% **Price:** \$22

**84 Trione 2009 Home Ranch Primitivo (Alexander Valley).** Blended with 18% Zinfandel, this is a toughly acidic, tannic wine, rather rustic in its way. Strong acidity perks up cherry and berry flavors that are hot on the finish, giving the wine a sweet and sour fruit sauce taste. —S.H.

**abv:** 14.9% **Price:** \$28

**83 Cameron Hughes 2009 Lot 219 Monte Rosso Vineyard Zinfandel (Sonoma Valley).** A bit of a disappointment from this famed vineyard. The wine is uneven, with sweetly candied cherry flavors alongside unripe vegetal notes. —S.H.

**abv:** 15.3% **Price:** \$16

**83 Four Vines 2009 OVC Old Vine Cuvee Zinfandel (California).** Frankly sweet and sugary, with raspberry and cherry jam flavors sprinkled with cinnamon and pepper. An easy, everyday Zin, at a fair price. —S.H.  
**abv:** 14.4% **Price:** \$12

**82 Barber 2009 Mr. Beast Zinfandel (Dry Creek Valley).** Zinfandel has not been this winery's best bottling. This one's dry and drinkable, but sharp and sweet-sour, with cherry Lifesaver candy flavors. —S.H.  
**abv:** 14% **Price:** \$20

**82 Carmenet 2009 Vintner's Collection Reserve Zinfandel (California).** Weirdly acidic and sweet, with cloying raspberry Lifesaver candy flavors. —S.H.  
**abv:** 13.8% **Price:** \$12

**80 Jigar 2009 Zinfandel (Dry Creek Valley).** Too high in alcohol and too overtly sweet in sugar. Tastes like an inexpensive Port. —S.H.  
**abv:** 15.5% **Price:** \$24

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## OTHER RED WINES

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**90 Villa Andretti 2009 Dolcetto (California).** A good, dry wine for drinking with Italian fare rich in cheese and tomato sauce. The acidity cuts right through. Meanwhile, sour cherry candy flavors will wake up with a nice cut of beef and bring out the wine's inherent sweetness. —S.H.  
**abv:** 13.3% **Price:** \$35

**89 Gianelli 2009 Aglianico (Tuolumne County).** Gianelli's first attempt with this Italian variety is all that one expects from an Aglianico that is meant to be deep, dark and dense, all chocolate and cherries, tight yet bright. Save it a few years for when you're next having osso bucco. —V.B.  
**abv:** 14.6% **Price:** \$28

**89 Gianelli 2009 Montepulciano (Tuolumne County).** Mouthpuckeringly tannic at first, this rustic, leathery Montepulciano grown in the hills above Jamestown has a lot of soul, its Italian roots easy to trace and enjoy. Chuck Hovey makes the well-structured, full-bodied wine, a liquid bowl of ripe plums and raspberries, which could stand a bit of bottle age and a gigantic plate of food. **Cellar Selection.** —V.B.  
**abv:** 14.8% **Price:** \$28

**88 Rock Wall 2010 Montepulciano (Contra Costa County).** Pungent and wild, the grapes for this Montepulciano are grown in the Isabella Francesca Vineyard in Oakley. Winemaker Shauna Rosenblum makes this wine like a Zinfandel, and it is approachable and fairly light, with wild strawberries, black tea and dried herbs throughout and even a slight backdrop of smoke. —V.B.  
**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$20

**86 Trentadue 2009 Block 601 Sangiovese (Alexander Valley).** A little rustic around the edges, with some sharp acidity and sweetness to the red

cherry fruit. A nice cheeseburger, smoky from the grill and slathered in ketchup, is a perfect match. —S.H.  
**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$22

**85 Adelaida 2008 Grenache (Paso Robles).** Pretty color on this wine, a light ruby red like Pinot Noir, and the mouthfeel is nice and light. The flavors are of sugar-sweetened raspberry tea, and tire after a sip or two because of the sweetness. —S.H.  
**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$32

**85 L de Lyeth 2008 Malbec (California).** A sound, rather rustic wine for drinking now with barbecue. It's hardy in tannins, with blackberry, blueberry and dark chocolate flavors that are dry and spicy. —S.H.  
**abv:** 13.3% **Price:** \$13

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## ROSÉ

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**87 Cameron Hughes 2010 Lot 256 Rosé (Napa Valley).** For full review see page 13. **Best Buy.**  
**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$12

**87 Wrath 2010 Saignée Pinot Noir (Monterey).** A good rosé, fruity and spicy and crisp in acids. It's a bit on the sweet side, but otherwise offers pleasant flavors of strawberries, raspberries, herb tea and spices. —S.H.  
**abv:** 13.2% **Price:** \$18

**84 Villa Andretti 2010 Rosé (Sonoma Valley).** Heavy and sugary sweet, with flavors like melted raspberry and strawberry jam, with the alcohol of wine. Almost like a dessert wine. —S.H.  
**abv:** 13.1% **Price:** \$30

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## DESSERT WINES

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**86 Trentadue 2007 Viognier Port (Russian River Valley).** Very, very sweet, with heavily sugared apricot, grilled pineapple, golden mango and vanilla cream flavors. Lots of oaky butterscotch and caramel, as well. Lacks vital structure, though, which limits the score. —S.H.  
**abv:** 18.7% **Price:** \$25/375 ml

**85 Cedar Mountain 2000 Late Bottled Vintage Port (California).** This Livermore producer has sourced from Livermore and Amador County—both Portuguese varieties and Cabernet Sauvignon—to make this Port-style wine, a mouthful of caramel toffee melted and toasty. A hint of marshmallow's there too. —V.B.  
**abv:** 22.8% **Price:** \$40

**85 Peju 2007 Delicias Estate Zinfandel Port (Napa Valley).** Sweet, but lacking in substance, with thin, sugary raspberry, blackberry and chocolate flavors. If sugar is all you need, it's for you, but it seriously requires greater depth, especially at this price. —S.H.  
**abv:** 17.9% **Price:** \$50/375 ml

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## CALIFORNIA WHITES

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### CHARDONNAY

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**96 Foxen 2010 Block UU Bien Nacido Vineyard Chardonnay (Santa Maria Valley).** You want decadence, opulence and fabulosity in your Chardonnay? This one's for you. It's tremendous in ripe pineapple, pear, peach, mango, lime, tangerine and papaya flavors. So much fruit, while the oak application is never heavy handed, applying just the right touch of buttered toast. Where does all that vanilla honey come from? A magnificent example of a first-growth California Chardonnay, at a great price. **Editors' Choice.** —S.H.  
**abv:** 14.8% **Price:** \$32

**92 Foxen 2010 Bien Nacido Vineyard Steel Cut Chardonnay (Santa Maria Valley).** There's no oak on this Chardonnay, but you won't miss it at all. It's so decadent in long hangtime pineapple, tangerine, mango and spice flavors, superripe and just delicious. The alcohol is fairly high, but that's the price of all this richness. —S.H.  
**abv:** 15.3% **Price:** \$32

**91 Martin Ray 2010 Chardonnay (Russian River Valley).** For full review see page 6. **Editors' Choice.**  
**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$20

**91 Phillips Hill 2010 Ridley Vineyard Chardonnay (Anderson Valley).** Tasted among a flood of sweet, oaky Chardonnays, this one's a welcome winner. It's dry and crisp in acidity, and while there's plenty of pear, orange and papaya fruit, it also has a rocky minerality that grounds the richness. The alcohol is refreshingly low. —S.H.  
**abv:** 14% **Price:** \$30

**91 Three Sticks 2009 Durell Vineyard Chardonnay (Sonoma Valley).** Another very nice Chardonnay from Durell. It's almost too oaky, with charred, buttered toast aromas and flavors dominating. But the underlying tropical fruit, orange cream and mineral flavors are fine, and so is the zesty acidity. The winemaker might want to lower the amount of new oak, or the level of toast, because the wine really doesn't need that much. —S.H.  
**abv:** 14.6% **Price:** \$45

**90 Carneros Highway 2010 Nueva Chardonnay (Carneros).** You get lots of bang for your buck with this Chardonnay. It's flashy in pineapples, oranges and peaches, with plenty of sweet, buttered toast and vanilla from oak. Yet there's fine, crisp acidity for balance, and even a touch of Carneros minerality. —S.H.  
**abv:** 13.2% **Price:** \$18

**90 Fess Parker 2010 Ashley's Chardonnay (Sta. Rita Hills).** For full review see page 8.  
**abv:** 14.1% **Price:** \$34

# **BUYING**guide

**90 MacRostie 2009 Chardonnay (Sonoma Coast).** For full review see page 9. *Editors' Choice.*  
abv: 14.1% Price: \$25

**90 Martin Ray 2010 Reserve Chardonnay (Los Carneros).** For full review see page 9.  
abv: 13.5% Price: \$26

**90 Peju 2010 Persephone Estate Chardonnay (Napa Valley).** If not for the acidity and minerality, this would be a simple Chardonnay, with its fruit juicy flavors of peaches, oranges and pineapples. But that crisp, zesty structure gives it life. —S.H.  
abv: 13.8% Price: \$28

**90 Pont de Chevalier 2009 Chardonnay (Knights Valley).** A fine followup to the 2008, this Chardonnay, from a high valley between Sonoma County and Napa Valley, combines rich tropical fruit with good acidity and an earthiness that grounds it. Feels complex in the mouth, taking the California style and wrestling it to elegance. —S.H.  
abv: 14.5% Price: \$45

**89 Chalk Hill 2009 Musque Chardonnay (Chalk Hill).** Ripe and flashy in the California style, with pineapple, pear, crème brûlée and buttered toast aromas and flavors. Quite good, but a little too much of everything, including alcohol, and would benefit from some restraint. —S.H.  
abv: 15.5% Price: \$75

**89 Martin Ray 2010 Unoaked Chardonnay (Russian River Valley).** For full review see page 9.  
abv: 14.3% Price: \$19

**88 Cameron Hughes 2009 Lot 242 Chardonnay (Atlas Peak).** For full review see page 13. *Best Buy.*  
abv: 14.6% Price: \$13

**88 Fog Crest 2008 Level 6 Chardonnay (Russian River Valley).** Lots of leesy, vanilla richness in this New World-style Chardonnay. It brims with mango, orange and cinnamon spice flavors. Will satisfy fans of this sweet, creamy approach. —S.H.  
abv: 14.7% Price: \$45

**88 Hovey 2010 Duende Chardonnay (Calaveras County).** A lovely Foothills Chardonnay from longtime area winemaker Chuck Hovey, who also makes the Stevenot wines. With strong apple and cinnamon personality the wine also has an intriguing creaminess to it, with lilting lemon meringue. Let it open slowly or place it in the cellar for 2–5 years to let the tartness on the finish disappear. —V.B.  
abv: 13.8% Price: \$18

**88 Knights Bridge 2009 West Block Chardonnay (Knights Valley).** Oakier and sweeter than the fine '08, with the result that buttered toast and butterscotch flavors dominate. On the other hand, there's a dynamic core of tropical fruit as well as a firm minerality that helps to balance the oak, providing

structure. Definitely made in the New World style, and not shy about it. —S.H.  
abv: 15.5% Price: \$65

**88 La Fenêtre 2009 Chardonnay (Santa Maria Valley).** Dry, acidic and austere, this is a mineral Chardonnay just approaching citrus fruit flavors. It's distinguished in its Burgundian way, although it falls far short of richness if you're used to the California style. —S.H.  
abv: 13% Price: \$28

**87 Clos du Val 2009 Reserve Chardonnay (Carneros).** Chardonnay has not been Clos du Val's strong suit, and even though this is a reserve, it's hard to fall in love with. Dry and acidic, it lacks richness by today's standards, although you could charitably call it Chablisian. Still, it's an elegantly constructed wine with some complexity. —S.H.  
abv: 13.5% Price: \$45

**87 Fog Crest 2008 Estate Bottled Chardonnay (Russian River Valley).** Fog Crest's Chardonnays have been getting sweeter and oakier, it seems, and this is their most dessert-sweet yet. It's like a vanilla cream cocktail, infused with pineapple liqueur, with a slice of tangerine. —S.H.  
abv: 14.8% Price: \$45

**87 Landy Family Vineyards 2009 Estate Chardonnay (Russian River Valley).** Drier and more acidic than your typical rich Chardonnay, this bottling makes its mark on the elegant side of the equation. Although there's plenty of tropical fruit and green apples, it's made in a streamlined style that's food friendly. —S.H.  
abv: 14.6% Price: \$32

**87 Toad Hollow 2010 Francine's Selection Chardonnay (Mendocino County).** For full review see page 11.  
abv: 13.9% Price: \$15

**86 Dutch Bill Creek 2009 Chardonnay (Russian River Valley).** Your average California Chardonnay, fruity in pineapples and vanilla cream, with a spicy, butterscotchy richness. —S.H.  
abv: 14.2% Price: \$20

**86 Foxen 2010 Tinaquiac Vineyard Chardonnay (Santa Maria Valley).** Not the best Tinaquiac to come along in recent years. Even though the new oak is a relatively modest 25%, it seems over-oaked, dripping with buttered toast and caramel flavors that overshadow the underlying citrus and tropical fruits. —S.H.  
abv: 14.9% Price: \$34

**86 Grayson 2010 Lot 11 Chardonnay (California).** Lots of Chardonnay pleasure in this everyday, affordable wine. It's dry and creamy, with fine pineapple, lime and toast flavors. A real bargain for big parties. *Best Buy.* —S.H.  
abv: 13.9% Price: \$10

**86 Parallel 2009 Chardonnay (Russian River Valley).** Rich and sweet in pineapples, pears and honey, with sweet buttered toast, vanilla cream and

buttered popcorn flavors, this Chardonnay overdoes it in the modern style. It will appeal to lots of consumers. —S.H.  
abv: 14.8% Price: \$44

**86 Ridge 2008 Monte Bello Chardonnay (Santa Cruz Mountains).** A good Chardonnay that offers plenty of tropical fruit, pear and sweet, smoky oak flavors, brightened with crisp acidity. But Ridge hasn't been known as a source of great Chardonnay for years, and this '08 doesn't change that. It's seriously overpriced. —S.H.  
abv: 14.1% Price: \$60

**85 401K 2009 Chardonnay (Sonoma Coast).** Made in the modern style, this is a simple, sweet Chardonnay, with pineapple and pear jam, buttered toast, honey and vanilla flavors. —S.H.  
abv: 14.5% Price: \$15

**85 Angeline 2010 Reserve Chardonnay (Sonoma County-Santa Barbara County).** Gives just what Chardonnay fans like, a creamy smooth wine with vibrant vanilla, tropical fruit, green apple and buttered toast flavors that are a little sweet in honey. —S.H.  
abv: 13.9% Price: \$15

**85 Cameron Hughes 2009 Lot 232 Chardonnay (Carneros).** A bit metallic and brittle. But there's plenty of sweet pineapple and mango fruit, and enough oak to give a buttered toast richness. —S.H.  
abv: 14.4% Price: \$13

**85 it. 2009 Estate Grown, Premium Wine Box Chardonnay (Lodi).** This certified-green grown Chardonnay that has a pronounced aroma of green olive brine and is also most definitely toasty and tropical, finishing sweet. Would this make a happy companion on a picnic? Yes it would. —V.B.  
abv: 13.9% Price: \$19/3 L

**85 L de Lyeth 2010 Chardonnay (Sonoma County).** This is a sweet, oaky Chardonnay, made to appeal to the modern palate. It has sugary pineapple, green apple, pear, buttered toast and vanilla custard flavors, fortunately brightened with zesty acidity. —S.H.  
abv: 13.5% Price: \$13

**85 Peter Paul Wines 2009 Bacigalupi Vineyard Chardonnay (Russian River Valley).** The vineyard is a good one, and the underlying wine is rich in pineapples, green apples, lemons and limes, brightened with brisk acidity. However, the oak is heavy-handed. —S.H.  
abv: 14.5% Price: \$40

**85 Pezzi King 2010 Chardonnay (Russian River Valley).** Too sweet for comfort, with sugary pear, nectarine and orange flavors, liberally enhanced with caramelized oak. Shows good acidity, but really needs to be drier. —S.H.  
abv: 14.8% Price: \$26

**85 Trefethen 2008 Harmony Chardonnay (Oak Knoll).** Chardonnay has not been Trefethen's strong point, and this '08 doesn't change that



perspective. It's soft in structure and candied, with simple apricot, pear and oak flavors that finish sweet. —S.H.

abv: 14.1% Price: \$50

**84 Arroba 2009 Chardonnay (Napa Valley).** Sugary sweet and simple, like a peach, orange and pineapple juice drink, with a lot of caramelized oak flavor. —S.H.

abv: 14.1% Price: \$20

**84 Cameron Hughes 2009 Lot 216 Chardonnay (Carneros).** Sweet and simple in oak-dominated tropical fruit and pear flavors. Will satisfy Chardophiles who like this forward style. —S.H.

abv: 14.5% Price: \$13

**84 Cameron Hughes 2009 Lot 273 Chardonnay (Arroyo Seco).** A strongly flavored Chardonnay, forward in tangerine, apricot, raisin and golden mango flavors. Shows plenty of oak and Central Coast acidity. —S.H.

abv: 13.8% Price: \$13

**84 Courtney Benham 2010 Chardonnay (Santa Barbara County).** Your basic California Chardonnay, showing ripe tropical fruit, honey and oak flavors, brightened with acidity. Pretty simple, but not bad for the price. —S.H.

abv: 14.2% Price: \$15

**84 Fess Parker 2010 Chardonnay (Santa Barbara County).** The poster child for those who accuse California Chardonnay of being too sweet and oaky. Tastes like pineapple and orange granola, in the form of wine. —S.H.

abv: 14.2% Price: \$18

**84 Mark West 2010 Chardonnay (Central Coast).** Made in the sweet, simple way, with pineapple and orange jam fruit, buttered popcorn and vanilla flavors. However, the price isn't bad, and it will appeal to a lot of your friends at parties for its California richness. —S.H.

abv: 13.8% Price: \$10

**84 Peter Paul Wines 2010 Chardonnay (Russian River Valley).** Heavy and oaky, with buttered toast flavors swamping everything else. Underneath are pineapple and pear jam flavors. —S.H.

abv: 14.5% Price: \$25

**84 Wrath 2009 Fermata Chardonnay (Monterey).** A simple wine, with sugary pineapple jam and buttered popcorn flavors, overwhelmed by sweet oak. —S.H.

abv: 14.6% Price: \$35

**83 Four Vines 2010 Naked Chardonnay (Santa Barbara County).** Soft and sugary, this unoaked Chardonnay has simple, popularly appealing fruit juice flavors of pineapples, oranges and pears. —S.H.

abv: 13.9% Price: \$12

**83 Healdsburg Ranches 2010 Appellation Series Chardonnay (Russian River Valley).** Cloyingly sweet and jammy in pineapples, orang-

es, buttered toast and buttered popcorn. Made in the modern, popular style. —S.H.

abv: 14.4% Price: \$18

**83 Hop Kiln 2010 North Bridge Chardonnay (Russian River Valley).** Dominated by oak and put through malolactic fermentation, this Chardonnay has buttered toast, buttered popcorn, butterscotch and caramel flavors that swamp the underlying pineapples and green apples. —S.H.

abv: 13.8% Price: \$30

**83 Laguna 2009 Laguna Ranch Vineyard Chardonnay (Russian River Valley).** This is a simple Chardonnay, ripe and jammy in pineapples, with strong oak notes of buttered toast and caramel. —S.H.

abv: 14.7% Price: \$15

**83 Peter Paul Wines 2009 Mill Station Road Chardonnay (Russian River Valley).** So oaky, it tastes like toothpicks, with sweet vanilla, caramel and buttered toast notes. Hard to get past all that. —S.H.

abv: 14.5% Price: \$40

**83 Trione 2008 River Road Ranch Chardonnay (Russian River Valley).** Made with superripe fruit and scads of oak, this Chardonnay tastes like pineapple jam squeezed onto buttered popcorn. Somebody will like it, and it's okay in its own way, but it exemplifies the worst of the New World, oaky style. —S.H.

abv: 14.3% Price: \$30

**83 Wattle Creek 2009 Chardonnay (Yorkville Highlands).** Simple and sugary sweet, with orange and apricot jam, buttered toast and vanilla flavors. Good acidity, though. —S.H.

abv: 14.2% Price: \$25

**82 Benziger 2009 Chardonnay (Carneros).** A disagreeable wine, with so much oak, all you can taste is sugary butterscotch. Too bad, because there's a decent Chardonnay buried beneath. —S.H.

abv: 13.9% Price: \$16

**82 Carmenet 2009 Vintner's Collection Reserve Chardonnay (California).** Simple and one-dimensional, with buttered toast, buttered popcorn and sweet pineapple jam flavors. —S.H.

abv: 12.5% Price: \$12

**82 Franciscan 2010 Chardonnay (Napa Valley).** Sweet and oaky, this wine's pineapple, vanilla and caramel flavors quickly become cloying. —S.H.

abv: 13.5% Price: \$18

**82 McManis 2010 River Junction Chardonnay (California).** Soft, sugary-sweet and simple, like a fruit juice made from apricots, peaches and pineapples. —S.H.

abv: 13.5% Price: \$10

**82 Starkey's Court 2010 Green Acres Vineyard Chardonnay (Carneros).** Not much going on here beyond buttered toast, caramel and butterscotch flavors that swamp the lemondrop and pine-

apple fruit beneath. Defines the sweet, soft, overoaked California style of Chardonnay. —S.H.

abv: 14.2% Price: \$25

**82 Truett Hurst 2010 Swallowtail Chardonnay (Dry Creek Valley).** Made in the modern style, a predictable Chardonnay with too much oak riding on top of too thin fruit, finishing sweet and cloying. —S.H.

abv: 14.8% Price: \$20

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## PINOT GRIS/GRIGIO

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**88 Rocky Hill 2010 Richard Dinner Vineyards Pinot Gris (Sonoma Mountain).** Although there's no oak on this wine, it was aged on the lees, which gives it a creamy richness. Slightly sweet, it has pleasant, clean flavors of citrus fruits, peaches and green apples. —S.H.

abv: 14.5% Price: \$19

**85 Chalk Hill 2009 North Slope Pinot Gris (Chalk Hill).** Oaky, with buttered toast flavors dominating the underlying oranges and peaches. A bit hot in alcohol, too. —S.H.

abv: 15.4% Price: \$25

**83 Carmenet 2009 Vintner's Collection Reserve Pinot Grigio (California).** As sweet as a dessert wine. Tastes like sugared pineapple, apricot and orange juice. Fine in cleansing acidity, but it's not really a dry table wine. —S.H.

abv: 12.5% Price: \$12

**83 McManis 2010 Pinot Grigio (California).** This is a sweet, softly simple wine whose apricot, citrus and peach flavors will satisfy those looking for a decent everyday white wine. —S.H.

abv: 11.5% Price: \$10

**82 Backhouse 2010 Pinot Grigio (California).** Overtly sweet, like orange tea with a couple spoons of white sugar. —S.H.

abv: 12.5% Price: \$7

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## SAUVIGNON BLANC

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**93 Duckhorn 2010 Sauvignon Blanc (Napa Valley).** For full review see page 4.

abv: 13.5% Price: \$27

**93 Hall 2010 T Bar T Ranch Sauvignon Blanc (Alexander Valley).** Hall bought the T Bar T Ranch some years ago from Iron Horse, which did a fantastic job there. Now Hall has their own Sauvignon Blanc from this steep, hilly vineyard, and the result is tremendous. One of the best Sauvignon Blancs of the vintage, it's picture-perfect in the balance of tropical fruit, acidity, jazzy minerals and vanilla cream. A real standout. —S.H.

abv: 14.8% Price: \$30

**93 Trione 2010 River Road Ranch Sauvignon Blanc (Russian River Valley).** A brilliant Sauvignon Blanc, like a great French Sancerre. It's bone dry and wonderfully crisp in acidity, with a perfect balance of citrus fruits, green apples, white flowers,

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dried herbs and minerals, dusted with white pepper and Chinese Five Spices. If there's any oak at all, it's well in the background. **Editors' Choice.** —S.H.

**abv:** 14% **Price:** \$23

**90 Leese-Fitch 2010 Sauvignon Blanc (California).** For full review see page 12. **Best Buy.** **abv:** 13% **Price:** \$13

**90 Oberon 2010 Sauvignon Blanc (Napa Valley).** With a touch of green grass and gooseberry, this refreshing Sauvignon Blanc features richer flavors of pineapples, lemons, limes, honeysuckle and vanilla. It's a streamlined, elegant wine, at a very good price. **Editors' Choice.** —S.H. **abv:** 13.7% **Price:** \$16

**88 Artesa 2010 Sauvignon Blanc (Napa Valley).** There's just a bit of oak on this wine, which gives a pleasant buttered toast and vanilla edge to the ripe lime, kiwi, green apple and Asian pear fruit. With crisp acidity, it's a clean wine that's a little sweet, but not too much. —S.H. **abv:** 14.4% **Price:** \$26

**88 Evolve 2010 Sauvignon Blanc (Sonoma Valley).** A clean, brisk Sauvignon Blanc with lots of complex interest. It's dry, but rich in citrus, tropical fruit and honeysuckle flavors, with a tantalizing hint of gooseberry. —S.H. **abv:** 13.4% **Price:** \$20

**87 Foxen 2010 Vogelzang Vineyard Sauvignon Blanc (Happy Canyon of Santa Barbara).** Enormously ripe, with pineapple, lime, tangerine and green apple flavors that show the dry heat of this eastern part of the Santa Ynez Valley. The acidity tastes added on, but welcome, providing savory relief to the richness. —S.H. **abv:** 15% **Price:** \$26

**87 Pezzi King 2010 Sauvignon Blanc (Dry Creek Valley).** Ripe fruit is front and center on this unoaked wine. It's a blast of pineapples, green apples and limes, with sweet vanilla, honeysuckle and spices. Easy to drink, and nicely acidic to balance the richness. —S.H. **abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$18

**87 Pomelo 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (California).** What a nice Sauvignon Blanc, so savory and rich in fruit. It's a little sweet, with a honeyed edge to the peach, pineapple, lemon and green grass flavors. Nice with an Asian-style chicken salad with ginger and spices. From Mason. **Best Buy.** —S.H. **abv:** 13% **Price:** \$10

**87 Quivira 2010 Fig Tree Vineyard Sauvignon Blanc (Dry Creek Valley).** A rich, layered white wine that shows its Sauvignon origins in the green herb and grass notes that ground richer orange and fig flavors. With crisp acidity, it's basically dry, but finishes in a swirl of honey and spice. —S.H. **abv:** 13.8% **Price:** \$18

**87 Rock Wall 2010 Sauvignon Blanc (Lake County).** The tech sheet for this wine nicely mentions how the vineyard is surrounded by both

100-year-old walnut trees and, what do you know?, marijuana. Does either influence the wine? It does show a muskiness but really its strengths are steely drops of extreme lemon, most decidedly on the long, exuberant finish. —V.B. **abv:** 14.1% **Price:** \$15

**87 Tudal 2010 Honker Blanc Sauvignon Blanc (Napa Valley).** Good price for a Sauvignon Blanc this nice to pair with food. It's basically dry, although you'll find a honeyed richness around the lemon, lime and green apple flavors, as well as plenty of savory acidity that gets those tastebuds watering. —S.H. **abv:** 13.8% **Price:** \$14

**87 Tyler Florence 2010 Sauvignon Blanc (Napa Valley).** Made in a popularly appealing style, this slightly sweet wine has honeyed flavors of lemons, limes, green apples and white pepper. Very food-friendly, especially with salty foods. —S.H. **abv:** 14.2% **Price:** \$20

**85 Atmosphere 2010 Denmark St. Vineyard Fumé Blanc (Sonoma Valley).** The cold vintage took its toll here, resulting in less than ripe fruit. Although the wine is refreshingly dry and tart, the lemon and lime flavors are compromised by a tart green taste that finishes sour. —S.H. **abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$25

**85 Courtney Benham 2010 Sauvignon Blanc (Napa Valley).** Lots of gooseberry flavor in this slightly sweet, crisp wine. That gives it a green note, suggesting ammonia, although you'll find riper limes and papayas. —S.H. **abv:** 13.9% **Price:** \$11

**85 Signaterra 2010 Shone Farm Vineyard Sauvignon Blanc (Russian River Valley).** You'll find vibrant citrus and green apple flavors in this dry wine, with excellent acidity and a firm brace of minerals. There's also a dose of ammonia, if you're sensitive to that green, gooseberry note. —S.H. **abv:** 14.1% **Price:** \$24

**85 Toquade 2010 Sauvignon Blanc (Napa Valley).** New Zealand-style gooseberry and citrus fruit notes give this wine a rather tart taste, but it's dry, and gets the mouth watering. Pair with salty tapas foods. —S.H. **abv:** 13% **Price:** \$22

**84 Castle Rock 2010 Sauvignon Blanc (Mendocino County).** Yes, it's a good price, but this SB from Mendocino has loads of green pepper and peach fuzz that overpower its otherwise varietally familiar acidity and texture. —V.B. **abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$11

**84 Crosby Roamann 2010 Eternal Return Sauvignon Blanc (St. Helena).** An edgy Sauvignon Blanc, with green gooseberry, ammonia, lemon and lime aromas and flavors, accented with acidity. Just a little too unripe to merit a higher score. —S.H. **abv:** 13.2% **Price:** \$18

**84 Peju 2010 Persephone Vineyard Estate Sauvignon Blanc (Napa Valley).** An odd

wine, as sweet as pear and peach fruit juice, yet with a strong dose of acidic, green gooseberry. The right salty-sweet foods will balance it. —S.H.

**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$22

**84 Rock Rabbit 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (California).** Lots of ripe, flashy lemon, lime, tangerine, gooseberry, vanilla and spice flavors in this Sauvignon Blanc. It's a little sweet and sugary. A nice everyday white wine at a decent price. —S.H. **abv:** 13% **Price:** \$10

**84 Seven Daughters NV Sauvignon Blanc (California).** A little sweet and jammy in apicots, pineapples and limes, with a sugary finish. But acidity is just fine. Try with Vietnamese and Chinese pork, fish and chicken dishes whose sauces are sugared. —S.H. **abv:** 13.8% **Price:** \$15

**82 Andretti 2010 Sauvignon Blanc (Napa Valley).** Strong and acidic in green, gooseberry notes that approach ammonia, but also weirdly sweet in lemons, limes and pineapples. The combination is like a Chinese sweet and sour sauce for duck or chicken. —S.H. **abv:** 13.6% **Price:** \$33

## WHITE BLENDS

**84 Coquelicot 2009 Back Seat Blonde (Santa Ynez Valley).** Good acidity and a firm minerality provide the backbone to this citrus and tropical fruit-flavored wine. But it's too sweet, turning cloying after the first sip. —S.H. **abv:** 14.4% **Price:** \$17

**84 MommyJuice NV White (Central Coast).** It hardly matters what varieties this white blend is made from. It's just fine for a ten buck wine, with sweet citrus fruit and vanilla flavors and a nice kick of acidity. —S.H. **abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$10

**83 Rhapsody 2010 White (Napa County).** Pretty rustic, with sharp acidity giving a bite to honey-sweet pineapple, green apple and lime flavors. The blend is based on Chardonnay. —S.H. **abv:** 14.2% **Price:** \$13

## OTHER WHITE WINES

**93 Foxen 2010 Ernesto Wickenden Vineyard Chenin Blanc (Santa Maria Valley).** This is always one of the best Chenin Blancs in California, and Foxen's 2010 is one of their best ever. With plenty of new French oak and some serious weight and depth, it has the texture of Chardonnay, and even some of the tropical fruit. But there's a white flower and green apple note that's unique, as well as brisk, bright acidity. **Editors' Choice.** —S.H. **abv:** 13.4% **Price:** \$22

**91 Miraflores 2010 Viognier (El Dorado).** For full review see page 7. **abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$19

**88 Artesa 2010 Albariño (Carneros).** Carneros is really the perfect place to grow Albariño, due to its cool climate that lets the grapes ripen yet preserves vital acidity. This is really a fine example. It's juicy in acidity and dry in green apples and limes, with a touch of white flower and a hint of toasty oak. —S.H.  
**abv:** 13% **Price:** \$26

**88 Artesa 2010 Pinot Blanc (Carneros).** Feels and tastes like a Chardonnay, with some smoky oak influences and a medium-weight body framing orange, pear, green apple, white flower and vanilla flavors. Delicious and easy to drink now. —S.H.  
**abv:** 14.3% **Price:** \$26

**88 Rock Wall 2010 Heringer Vineyard Muscat Canelli (Yolo County).** A playfully rich and creamy version of Muscat Canelli made from grapes in the Clarksburg area between Sacramento and Lodi, an area making its abilities known in terms of growing alternative whites. Banana, vanilla and tones of lemon dominate. An easy quaff with bright acidity. —V.B.  
**abv:** 13.1% **Price:** \$18

**87 Trefethen 2010 Dry Riesling (Oak Knoll).** Doesn't seem quite as dry as previous vintages, despite the use of the word Dry on the label. Actually, it's semisweet, with sugary citrus fruit flavors. Brisk acidity provides needed balance. —S.H.  
**abv:** 12.5% **Price:** \$22

**85 Dr. Klapper 2010 Spatlese Halbtrocken Riesling (Santa Ynez Valley).** With low alcohol, this Riesling has considerable residual sugar. It has sweetened flavors of apricots, tangerines and peaches, brightened with fine acidity. —S.H.  
**abv:** 11% **Price:** \$23

**83 McManis 2010 Viognier (California).** Sweet and soft, which gives this Viognier a candied lemondrop, pineapple and butterscotch taste. Needs to be drier and better structured. —S.H.  
**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$11

## WASHINGTON

### CABERNETS & BLENDS

**93 Chateau Ste. Michelle 2008 Cold Creek Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Columbia Valley).** For full review see page 4. *Cellar Selection.*  
**abv:** 15% **Price:** \$28

**92 Cadaretta 2007 Springboard Red (Columbia Valley).** A limited-production Bordeaux-style reserve, this high-acid red has an unusually generous proportion (25%) of Petit Verdot; the rest is an equal split between Cabernet and Merlot. Still youthful and tight, it shows excellent structure and depth, with black fruits, earth, licorice and savory herbs. *Cellar Selection.* —P.G.  
**abv:** 14.2% **Price:** \$50

**92 Guardian Cellars 2008 The Alibi Cabernet Sauvignon-Merlot (Red Mountain).** A full-flavored blend of 60% Cabernet Sauvignon and 40% Merlot, sourced from the Klipsun, Ciel du Che-

val, and Kiona vineyards. Red Mountain is noted for its reds, and this one delivers. Mixed plum, cherry and cassis fruit is set against subtle streaks of chalk, graphite and ash. Complex and detailed, this young wine will blossom with further bottle age. *Cellar Selection.* —P.G.

**abv:** 14.9% **Price:** \$39

**92 Watermill 2008 Estate Cabernet Franc (Walla Walla Valley).** Wonderfully complex aromatics show a lovely floral note of fresh violets, married to scents of dusty tannins. Supple purple fruits combine with clove and other spices in a svelte wine with a full spectrum of flavors, from flower to fruit to cocoa powder. *Editors' Choice.* —P.G.

**abv:** NA **Price:** \$28

**91 :Nota Bene 2008 Abbinare (Columbia Valley).** A rich and smooth vintage for Abbinare, once again a Bordeaux-style blend that is half Merlot, and roughly 20% each Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc. Purple fruits are swathed in milk-chocolate tannins. It's full, firm, dense and immediately appealing, with aftertastes suggesting graphite and vanilla. *Editors' Choice.* —P.G.

**abv:** 14.9% **Price:** \$25

**91 :Nota Bene 2008 Conner Lee Vineyard (Columbia Valley).** Aged for 22 months in French oak—one third new—this is 67% Cabernet Sauvignon and 33% Merlot. Nota Bene's wines are not shy about high alcohol, but here the fruit stands up well to the oak treatment and shows no sign of over-ripeness. A good spine supports a rich wine with black fruits, balanced acids, and a big streak of espresso. *Editors' Choice.* —P.G.

**abv:** 15.1% **Price:** \$30

**91 :Nota Bene 2008 Dineen Vineyard (Yakima Valley).** Generously fruity, with mixed red and black berries, this Cab Franc/Cabernet Sauvignon blend is subtly layered with earthy flavors lightly hinting at barnyard and leather. Complex and focused, with soft tannins. —P.G.

**abv:** 15.1% **Price:** \$35

**91 Chateau Ste. Michelle 2008 Artist Series Red Meritage (Columbia Valley).** For full review see page 6.

**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$55

**91 Coeur d'Alene Cellars 2007 BDX (Horse Heaven Hills).** McKinley Springs vineyard sourced this outstanding blend of Cabernet Franc (45%), Cabernet Sauvignon (36%) and Merlot (19%). A complex and inviting, dusty bouquet of herb, olive and tart fruits introduces a wine with smooth moves and subtle details. A perfect mix of Washington fruit with a Bordeaux grip. —P.G.

**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$32

**91 Glencorrie 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (Walla Walla Valley).** A pure Cabernet, sleek and young, but already showing it has the stuff to age. Pretty cassis and black cherry fruit is framed in a smooth and compact structure with supporting acidity and judi-

cious application of new (50%) and used French oak. Immediately appealing, but built for cellaring. —P.G.

**abv:** NA **Price:** \$40

**90 :Nota Bene 2008 Ciel du Cheval Vineyard (Red Mountain).** The 2008 vintage marks a return to the Cabernet Sauvignon-dominated (43%) blend of earlier years, though the proportionate 29% Merlot and 28% Cabernet Franc are there in abundance. It's smoky and seductive, with dark, dense black fruits amply showcased with granite, clay, toast and charcoal components from the vineyard. —P.G.

**abv:** 15.3% **Price:** \$35

**90 :Nota Bene 2008 Miscela (Columbia Valley).** Grapes from Ciel du Cheval, Champoux and Dineen contribute to this attractive Bordeaux-style blend. Cassis and black cherry fruit are combined in a smooth, supple wine with generous coffee and licorice components. —P.G.

**abv:** 15.3% **Price:** \$25

**90 Arbor Crest 2008 Dionysus Meritage (Columbia Valley).** A Meritage blend of 65% Cabernet Sauvignon, 25% Cab Franc and small amounts of the other three Bordeaux grapes. Spicy, earthy and complex, this young wine needs further bottle age to pull all the components into focus. The dark, muscular fruit is set against sweet Asian spices. Tannins show a streak of green tea, and the finish turns a little sharp. —P.G.

**abv:** 13.8% **Price:** \$45

**90 Arbor Crest 2009 Five Vineyards Cabernet Sauvignon (Columbia Valley).** Forward and fruity with tart cranberry and raspberry flavors, this sharp-toned, edgy Cabernet has the structure and natural acidity to stand up to rich, fatty meats. The midpalate has core flavors of licorice and espresso, lending a darker, more substantial mouthfeel to the young red fruit. *Editors' Choice.* —P.G.

**abv:** 13.9% **Price:** \$18

**90 Coeur d'Alene Cellars 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (Horse Heaven Hills).** Supple and rich, this makes a fine partner to the winery's BDX red sourced from the same Horse Heaven Hills Vineyard. Plenty of toast, mocha, chocolate and coffee ground flavors fill up the middle, but the ripe cherry and cassis fruit is substantial enough to compete. Power and balance are here in abundance. —P.G.

**abv:** 13.9% **Price:** \$28

**90 Kontos Cellars 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (Walla Walla Valley).** Supple and astringent, with red and purple fruits and some peppery spice, this pure Cabernet offers myriad subtle pleasures. Light grace notes of orange peel, mint and chocolate adorn a wine with the structure to age for another decade. —P.G.

**abv:** NA **Price:** \$32

**90 Le Chateau 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (Columbia Valley).** Bursting with sweet cherry fruit scents and flavors, this rich and sensuous Cab has the broad palate appeal of many Washington Mer-



# **BUYING**guide

lots. Tannins are medium-grained; and the persistent finish is toasty with a trail of mocha. —P.G.

**abv:** NA **Price:** \$32

**90 Spring Valley Vineyard 2008 Derby Cabernet Sauvignon (Walla Walla Valley).** The rarest of the Spring Valley wines, this pure Cabernet Sauvignon offers ripe plum fruit flavors, wrapped in baking chocolate and licorice. It finishes with accents of sandalwood and citrus. —P.G.

**abv:** 15.5% **Price:** \$50

**90 Zerba Cellars 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Walla Walla Valley).** A fine effort and multiple gold medal winner, this is loaded with cherry fruit set around a broad midpalate. It holds its flavors consistently right on through the finish, bringing in barrel notes of coffee liqueur, Bourbon barrel and vanilla. —P.G.

**abv:** 14.6% **Price:** \$30

**89 Guardian Cellars 2008 Conner Lee Vineyard Gun Metal (Columbia Valley).** In a cool vintage such as 2008, grapes from this northern vineyard bring a lighter, more elegant style to the Gun Metal red. The blend is half Cabernet Sauvignon, 43% Merlot, and 7% Cabernet Franc. Strawberry and cherry flavors are pretty but light, like good candy, with a gentle fade. —P.G.

**abv:** 14.4% **Price:** \$37

**89 Guardian Cellars 2008 Stillwater Creek Vineyard The Wanted Cabernet Sauvignon-Cabernet Franc (Columbia Valley).** This could be labeled Cabernet Sauvignon, as the proportion of Cab Franc has been cut from half to just 21%. It sees a lot of new French oak, and at this young age remains a tight, tannic, tongue-scraper. Ripe, primary black fruits—blackberry and cassis—are cloaked in toasty cracker flavors. Decant this one if you plan to drink it anytime soon. —P.G.

**abv:** 14.2% **Price:** \$37

**89 Saviah Cellars 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (Walla Walla Valley).** The overwhelming impression is of cherries. Plush and full through the middle, the round and fruity style of Cabernet shows polished tannins and a finishing streak of vanilla. —P.G.

**abv:** 14.1% **Price:** \$28

**89 Spring Valley Vineyard 2008 Frederick (Walla Walla Valley).** The Frederick bottling complements the Uria, with Cabernet Sauvignon comprising half the blend. All five Bordeaux grapes are included, and the finished wine is aged for 21 months in two thirds new French oak. It all adds up to a lush, high alcohol, jammy wine with black cherry fruit framed in toasty barrel flavors. —P.G.

**abv:** 15.3% **Price:** \$50

**89 The Jack 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon (Columbia Valley).** The phenomenally successful Jack brand has expanded. This is now a varietally labeled Cabernet Sauvignon. Forward and fruity with black cherry hard candy flavors. It adds just the barest

hint of earth and fungus, giving it some welcome depth and detail. —P.G.

**abv:** 14.1% **Price:** \$18

**89 Watermill 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (Walla Walla Valley).** Chocolatey and fruit-forward, this Cabernet, a mélange of cherries and milk chocolate, is instantly satisfying. Medium length, it has plenty of toasty highlights, along with coffee and caramel from barrel aging. —P.G.

**abv:** NA **Price:** \$24

**88 Abeja 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (Columbia Valley).** This is labeled as Cabernet but is a Bordeaux-style blend that includes small percentages of Merlot, Petit Verdot and Cabernet Franc. At the moment the wine is not especially expressive. There are hints of peppery herb in the nose, lightly ripe red fruits, and a pleasing, buttery finish. —P.G.

**abv:** 14.9% **Price:** \$42

**88 Guardian Cellars 2008 The Rookie Cabernet Sauvignon (Red Mountain).** Given the vineyard sources (Kiona, Ciel du Cheval) and the AVA (Red Mountain), this pure Cabernet Sauvignon may come into its own with a bit more bottle age. Tasted prior to release, it's in a bit of a dumb phase, the fruit essentially in hiding. A hint of raspberry is there, cloaked in leafy notes, with a slightly chalky finish. —P.G.

**abv:** 14.8% **Price:** \$39

**88 Spring Valley Vineyard 2008 Uria (Walla Walla Valley).** The Merlot-based Uria includes 36% Cabernet Franc, 8% Petit Verdot and 3% Malbec from the estate vineyards. Perhaps due to its youth, the wine has a bit too much heat and sharpness for its fruit. Spring Valley seems to be sacrificing terroir for sheer power. It's plenty ripe, but the fruit flavors are blocky, with noticeable volatility. —P.G.

**abv:** 14.9% **Price:** \$50

**88 SuLei Cellars 2009 Roller Girl Jammer Red (Walla Walla Valley).** Fruity and polished, this broadly appealing red blend is two thirds Cabernet Sauvignon, 20% Cab Franc and the rest Merlot, from a quartet of Walla Walla Valley vineyards. Smooth and mellow, it's already aging gracefully, with light barrel flavors of toast and caramel. —P.G.

**abv:** 14.3% **Price:** \$19

**87 Arbor Crest 2009 Conner Lee Vineyard Cabernet Franc (Columbia Valley).** Scents suggest sweet grain and cracker ahead of thinly defined red fruit, and flavors follow. Light and slightly grapey, this is best consumed young. —P.G.

**abv:** 13.8% **Price:** \$22

**87 Ash Hollow 2007 Nine Mile Red Table Wine (Walla Walla Valley).** A Bordeaux-style blend that spent three years in barrel, this is showing a dried blood/brick edge and has lost its primary fruit flavors. Plum and prune fruit, somewhat dried out, finishes with stiff tannins. —P.G.

**abv:** 13.8% **Price:** \$20

**87 Chateau Ste. Michelle 2009 Indian Wells Cabernet Sauvignon (Columbia Valley).** A forward style, with a generous (14%) Syrah component,

this fruity Cabernet tastes of fresh raspberries and cherries. It finishes with some citrusy, chalky acidity and just a hint of green fruit, not quite integrated into the rest of the flavors. —P.G.

**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$18

**87 Glencorrie 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (Columbia Valley).** This is a carefully made Cabernet, 100% varietal, with light and clean fruit flavors of plum and cherry. The mix of French and American oak (how new unspecified) is lightly applied, and the wine is nicely balanced, but no blockbuster. —P.G.

**abv:** NA **Price:** \$35

**87 Gordon Brothers 2009 Six Cabernet Sauvignon (Columbia Valley).** A single-clone, single-vineyard, estate wine. Released young, it is oaky, liquorous and sharply volatile. Plenty of plum and sweet berry fruit flavors suggest a wine with the power to age, but at the moment it has not come together, and has a vinegary bite to the finish. —P.G.

**abv:** 13.8% **Price:** \$50

**87 Plumb Cellars 2007 Damn Straight Red (Columbia Valley).** A Bordeaux-style blend that is overrun with rough, raw oak barrel flavors. The black fruits are plentiful, but they are swathed in lumber, and as a result the finish feels coarse and turns bitter. With more cellar time, or lengthy decanting, it may come into better focus. —P.G.

**abv:** NA **Price:** \$32

**87 Skylite Cellars 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Walla Walla Valley).** A pure, varietal Cabernet Sauvignon, well aged, from an excellent vintage. It's a smooth wine, drinking perhaps at its peak, with an herbal edge to the red fruit and a suggestion of green in the tannins. —P.G.

**abv:** NA **Price:** \$28

**87 Sweet Valley 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (Walla Walla Valley).** There is some volatility in the nose, along with strong scents of the new French oak. But the flavors are substantial and bring tart fruit with black olive, toast and coffee highlights. The acidity seems chalky, but it's a noticeable improvement from previous vintages. —P.G.

**abv:** NA **Price:** \$35

**86 DaMa 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (Columbia Valley).** The blend includes 10% each portions of Merlot and Cabernet Franc. Cherry and plum fruit flavors, with medium concentration and backing acidity. —P.G.

**abv:** NA **Price:** \$30

**86 Fort Walla Walla 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Walla Walla Valley).** This wine has a good core of raspberry fruit, but it is overwhelmed by sharp and volatile aromas. For those sensitive to such high notes, they are strong enough to give a vinegary bite to the finish. For some tasters, it won't be a problem. —P.G.

**abv:** 13.9% **Price:** \$35

**85 Chateau Walla Walla 2008 Masterpiece Red (Walla Walla Valley).** Three quarters Cabernet Sauvignon, one quarter Merlot, sourced from

the Zerba vineyard. The scents and flavors are loaded with raw oak; this seems like a heavier version of the winery's Castle Red. The tannins are slightly green, and the over-the-top barrel flavors turn the finish bitter and chalky. —P.G.

**abv:** NA **Price:** \$45

**84 Raised By Wolves 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon (Walla Walla Valley).** This young Cabernet feels thin and earthy, with little to offer in the way of fruit. Aged in American oak, roughly one third new, it is tart and unyielding. —P.G.

**abv:** 13.9% **Price:** \$26

**83 Hawkins Cellars 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Columbia Valley).** It's difficult to see how this wine can register alcohol almost 15%. Flavors are thin, green and tannic, with hardly a hint of fruit. —P.G.

**abv:** 14.8% **Price:** \$20

**83 Mansion Creek 2008 Waldheim Cabernet Sauvignon (Walla Walla Valley).** Thin and tart, with aggressively astringent tannins. There is a noticeable scent and flavor of rubber as well. —P.G.

**abv:** NA **Price:** \$24

## OTHER RED BLENDS

**96 Charles Smith 2008 King Coal Cabernet Sauvignon-Syrah (Columbia Valley).** For full review see page 3. *Editors' Choice.*

**abv:** 15% **Price:** \$100

**95 K Vintners 2008 Ovide En Cerise Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon-Syrah (Walla Walla Valley).** Sourced from another of the Cayuse vineyards, this is two-thirds Cabernet Sauvignon and one-third Syrah—a proven blend in Walla Walla. There is a potently aromatic herbal quality to the perfectly ripened fruit that marries black cherry and earthy tannins to the herbs. A big wine, with dried leaf character dominating the tannins. Good length, in an Italian style, with a good decade of life ahead. *Cellar Selection.* —P.G.

**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$60

**95 K Vintners 2008 The Creator (Washington).** This edition of The Creator is a one-time only mix of 43% Cabernet Sauvignon from Stoneridge, 21% Cabernet from Cailloux, and 36% Syrah from Morrison Lane. It's edgy and tight, with sharply defined corners—herbal, with a leafy/stemmy note, well-integrated into wild, brambly berry fruits. The 50% new oak is virtually invisible at this point; it fills out the mouthfeel but does not show specifically. *Editors' Choice.* —P.G.

**abv:** 15% **Price:** \$55

**94 K Vintners 2008 Roma En Chamberlain Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon-Syrah (Walla Walla Valley).** A similar blend to the Ovide; this is 62% Cabernet Sauvignon and 38% Syrah. The fruit is more forward here, with pretty blackberry and black cherry flavors, and a dark and forceful streak of iron and charcoal and licorice. A light lavender note adds interest. —P.G.

**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$60

**92 Saviah Cellars 2008 Une Vallée Red (Walla Walla Valley).** A great year for this wine, it's lush, satiny, spicy and ripe. Loaded with luscious fruit flavors of cherries and plums, dressed up in cocoa and cinnamon highlights. Hints of violets, licorice and coffee elevate the finish and the aromatics. A sensual delight. *Editors' Choice.* —P.G.

**abv:** 14.1% **Price:** \$32

**91 Col Solare 2008 Red (Columbia Valley).** Vineyard sources for Col Solare are evolving as the recently planted estate vineyard comes into bearing. This vintage incorporates fruit from several Red Mountain vineyards, though not Col Solare itself, along with lots from elsewhere around the state. Toasty and full-bodied, two-thirds Cabernet, the rest Merlot, Cab Franc and Syrah, this is a nicely blended wine but not yet showing the precision and structural detail of the super-Tuscans it is modeled upon. —P.G.

**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$70

**91 Guardian Cellars 2009 Chalk Line (Columbia Valley).** Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah, Merlot and Cabernet Franc are in the blend, and this may be the best Chalk Line ever. Cherries and chocolate rule here, with tasty highlights of toast and caramel. Smooth and supple, it glides across the palate into a satisfying finish with a lick of citrus to liven it up. *Editors' Choice.* —P.G.

**abv:** 14.7% **Price:** \$25

**91 Rôtie Cellars 2009 Northern Blend Red (Washington).** Spicy and young, this tart and tannic Syrah is some years away from its optimal drinking window. It was co-fermented with 5% Viognier, boosting the aromatics. Though still tight and sharp-toned, the length and focus are impressive, and the finish lingers gracefully, another suggestion that this is a wine to tuck away in the cellar. *Cellar Selection.* —P.G.

**abv:** NA **Price:** \$40

**90 Flying Trout 2008 Lake Blend Red (Columbia Valley).** Essentially a Malbec/Cabernet Sauvignon blend (with a splash of Syrah). The young fruit flavors open into a generous, complex and nicely detailed wine. At first fruity and tart, with a sweet/sour plum core, it brings in spices and herbal highlights through a layered finish. —P.G.

**abv:** NA **Price:** \$28

**90 Kontos Cellars 2008 Alatus Blend (Columbia Valley).** This almost-Bordeaux style blend—the exception is a splash of Syrah—mixes fruit from Pepper Bridge, Les Collines, Seven Hills and Stone Tree vineyards. Mostly Merlot, stylistically it fits right in with the other 2008 reds from Kontos. Ripe red fruit, a smooth, even silky mouthfeel, highlights of orange peel and a chocolaty finish. —P.G.

**abv:** NA **Price:** \$32

**90 Seven Hills 2008 Planing Mill Red (Columbia Valley).** Firm and tartly wound, with cassis and black cherry at the core of a young, stiffly tannic, Cabernet-based blend. Black fruits are nuanced

with earth and olive, smoke and graphite, all subtle but definitely in view. *Editors' Choice.* —P.G.

**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$18

**90 Sinclair Estate Vineyards 2008 Pentatonic Red (Walla Walla Valley).** The blend is two thirds Cabernet, 21% Merlot and about 5% each Malbec and Syrah. It's an easy-drinking wine, with a palate-pleasing spread of plum, spice, toast, cinnamon and chocolate. There is a suggestion of Walla Walla dust and the wine really expands into the glass (and on into the palate) if you give it a good hour to breathe. —P.G.

**abv:** 14.4% **Price:** \$40

**90 Three Rivers 2009 River's Red (Columbia Valley).** For full review see page 13. *Best Buy.*

**abv:** 14.1% **Price:** \$14

**89 Nota Bene 2008 Una Notte (Columbia Valley).** Roughly half Grenache, 38% Syrah and 10% Mourvèdre, this shows intriguing aromas of black fruits, citrus, pine needle and loam. In the mouth there is a somewhat disjointed impression, with raspberry fruit and coffee grounds dominating. —P.G.

**abv:** 15.2% **Price:** \$32

**89 Sinclair Estate Vineyards 2008 Vixen Red (Columbia Valley).** This is an unusual mix of both Rhône and Bordeaux grapes—46% Mourvèdre, 19% Syrah, 13% Cabernet, 11% Grenache, 7% Merlot and 4% Malbec. It comes together in a somewhat diffuse red with good balance, good fruit and highlights of barrel and spice. Very tasty, just not particularly focused. —P.G.

**abv:** 14.1% **Price:** \$35

**88 Flying Trout 2008 Cutthroat Blend Red (Horse Heaven Hills).** Here winemaker Ashley Trout has matched her Malbec with 35% Syrah, all sourced from the Phinny Hill Vineyard. Fruity and forward, with high acidity in this relatively cool vintage, it opens up slowly to bring in Asian spices and subtle barrel notes. —P.G.

**abv:** NA **Price:** \$35

**88 Gordon Brothers 2008 Tradition (Columbia Valley).** Half Cabernet Sauvignon and half Syrah, this sharp and spicy red brings bright berry fruit scents and flavors. A few more years of bottle age will help to smooth it out. —P.G.

**abv:** 13.9% **Price:** \$30

**88 McCrea Cellars NV non sequitur (Washington).** Always a Rhône-style blend, this latest version of McCrea's non sequitur puts the emphasis on Syrah, Mourvèdre and Cinsault. At first it smells a little prune, but in the mouth it layers in cola and chocolate, and the fruit keeps on trucking and does not fade or fail. Prime time drinking right now. —P.G.

**abv:** 14.8% **Price:** \$20

**88 Rôtie Cellars 2009 Southern Blend Red (Washington).** This is two-thirds Grenache, the balance divided equally between Syrah and Mourvèdre. It's a fruity mix of berry and plum flavors, with added spice and a lick of chocolate from aging in once-used

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French oak barrels. Relatively light, very clean and best for drinking young. —P.G.

**abv:** NA **Price:** \$40

**88 The Jack 2009 Red (Columbia Valley).** A Merlot-based red blend, aged in American oak (30% new), it's a real palate-pleaser. Strawberries and plums dance into a detailed wine with fine-grained tannins and a pleasing herbal streak. It would be hard to find a more party-friendly red. —P.G.

**abv:** 14.1% **Price:** \$18

**87 O 2007 Red (Columbia Valley).** Firm, tart berry fruit, annotated with dried herb and leaf. The tannins are nicely smoothed out, though the wine finishes with a slightly chalky aftertaste. —P.G.

**abv:** NA **Price:** \$NA

**87 Righteous 2008 Red (Walla Walla Valley).** This is a pleasant red blend, mostly Merlot, with a splash or two of Cab and Syrah. Tart and young, it's nicely structured and spicy, with balanced flavors of herb and plum. Hints of cumin and Asian spices add further interest. —P.G.

**abv:** NA **Price:** \$14

**86 Ash Hollow 2007 Headless Red (Walla Walla Valley).** This is 95% Cabernet Sauvignon from the estate vineyards. Quite sour with lip-puckering cherry fruit, it thins out and finishes with hard, slightly chalky tannins. —P.G.

**abv:** NA **Price:** \$18

**86 Le Chateau 2008 Castle Red (Columbia Valley).** A blend of roughly equal parts Syrah, Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot, this aggressively oaky red puts the fruit in a supporting role. Tannic, chewy, rough and tumble, it's plenty big, but not a finesse wine. —P.G.

**abv:** NA **Price:** \$20

**86 Trio Vintners 2008 RIOT Red Table Wine (Columbia Valley).** RIOT is mostly Mourvèdre in 2008, with small percentages of Sangiovese and Grenache. Though for some super sniffers it may seem too volatile and a bit vinegary, it offers bright berry fruit and a chocolaty finish. —P.G.

**abv:** 14.1% **Price:** \$18

## MALBEC

**90 Watermill 2008 Estate Malbec (Walla Walla Valley).** Watermill's wines are generally pure varietals and almost always estate-grown, as here. Sweet with generous blueberry and boysenberry fruit flavors, this is a lovely Malbec, perfectly balanced. Tannins are silky and delicately touched with chocolate and spice. —P.G.

**abv:** 14.6% **Price:** \$28

**89 :Nota Bene 2008 Verhey Vineyard Malbec (Yakima Valley).** Aromatic, with a young, grapey character, this pure Malbec lets the fruit shine and keeps the new oak down to a modest 15%. Berries and citrus are kissed with light herb, threading gracefully into a tannic but well-constructed finish. —P.G.

**abv:** 15.2% **Price:** \$30

**88 Flying Trout 2008 Konnowac Vineyard Old Vines Malbec (Rattlesnake Hills).**

This pure Malbec from the Konnowac Vineyard is labeled Old Vines, though it's not clear how old is old. Effusive scents and flavors of raspberries dominate, with a hard candy flavor matched to juicy acidity. There's a subtle hint of coffee lacing together the finish. —P.G.

**abv:** NA **Price:** \$36

**88 Saviah Cellars 2008 Malbec (Walla Walla Valley).** Sharp and peppery, this Walla Walla Valley Malbec starts out fruity and forward, then brings in flavors of dried leaf and tea. It's a two-step wine, perhaps caught between youth and maturity. —P.G.

**abv:** 14.1% **Price:** \$30

**87 Flying Trout 2008 Malbec (Columbia Valley).** Light and forward, this nicely balanced Malbec mixes berry-flavored fruit with supple tannins. It fades gently into a soft finish. —P.G.

**abv:** NA **Price:** \$36

**84 Righteous 2009 Malbec (Walla Walla Valley).** Primary, light fruit flavors of strawberry touched with herb. Not much else going on in this young, still raw and grapey wine. —P.G.

**abv:** NA **Price:** \$24

## MERLOT

**92 Northstar 2008 Merlot (Walla Walla Valley).** Vineyard sources in 2008 are Spring Valley and Anna Marie (in the Seven Hills region). Tannic and aromatic, this spicy effort leads with black fruits, fresh herbs and a whiff of chocolate. An underlying minerality gives texture and length. Still young, it's balanced and already well-integrated. It should improve even more with a few years of bottle age. **Editors' Choice.** —P.G.

**abv:** 14.7% **Price:** \$50

**91 Arbor Crest 2009 Four Vineyards Merlot (Columbia Valley).** Tart and bright, with an almost-jammy mix of raspberry and strawberry preserves, this concentrated, fruit-powered Merlot over-delivers for the price. Along with the luscious fruit are darker streaks of iron, coffee grounds and char, all in a classy, well-designed, four-vineyard blend. **Editors' Choice.** —P.G.

**abv:** 13.8% **Price:** \$16

**91 Northstar 2008 Merlot (Columbia Valley).** This wine gets the all-star treatment, blending fruit from 14 vineyards, and aging it in 60% new French oak. It's a substantial, muscular effort, with dark fruit, earth and tar components. A small addition of Petit Verdot darkens the color and thickens the tannins. There is just a hint of alcoholic burn in the finish. —P.G.

**abv:** 14.6% **Price:** \$40

**89 Kontos Cellars 2008 Merlot (Walla Walla Valley).** Soft and chocolaty, this smooth and broadly expressive Merlot has immediate flavor appeal. From a pair of Walla Walla vineyards, it's a showcase for silky fruit and buttery tannins. —P.G.

**abv:** 14.3% **Price:** \$30

**88 :Nota Bene 2008 Conner Lee Vineyard Merlot (Columbia Valley).**

If the label is to be believed, this pure Merlot, from a relatively cool site in a relatively cool year, tops 16% alcohol. The flavors reflect that; a thick mix of tar, smoke, asphalt, espresso and coffee grounds. Buried in there is some black cherry fruit, but it is definitely the barrel flavors and the alcohol that dominate. —P.G.

**abv:** 16.1% **Price:** \$30

**88 Chateau Ste. Michelle 2009 Indian Wells Merlot (Columbia Valley).** An elegant wine, with nicely framed red berry fruit flavors. Hints of dried herbs and modest tannins put everything in balanced proportion. —P.G.

**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$18

**88 Fort Walla Walla 2007 Merlot (Walla Walla Valley).** Tart and sappy, with tasty blueberry and cherry fruit. A bit like biting into a big slice of cherry pie, with baking spices and toasty highlights. It's got a good tang to it, and plenty of ripe fruit. —P.G.

**abv:** 13.8% **Price:** \$32

**87 Otis Kenyon 2008 Merlot (Walla Walla Valley).** Fruit from Seven Hills and Pepper Bridge vineyards is sourced for this pure Merlot. In this somewhat difficult year it doesn't quite hang together; the fruit flavors run from prune and raisin to simply grapy. Citrusy, chalky acids seem not quite integrated, giving the finish a somewhat disjointed feeling. —P.G.

**abv:** 14.6% **Price:** \$30

**86 Gordon Brothers 2009 Block 3 Merlot (Columbia Valley).** Tart to the point of sour, this hints at cherry fruit, with toasted grain and cracker flavors equally strong. The wine seems just on the edge of ripe; definitely for those who seek high acid flavors. —P.G.

**abv:** 13.6% **Price:** \$30

**86 Seven Hills 2009 Merlot (Columbia Valley).** It was difficult to get much out of the glass; the wine may have entered a dumb phase. There were vague hints of barnyard and plastic, suggestions of red fruits, and overall the wine left a rather sharp, herbal impression. —P.G.

**abv:** 14.2% **Price:** \$22

**85 DaMa 2008 Merlot (Walla Walla Valley).** Sharp, tannic, and showing some burn in the finish, this brings mixed berry fruit with a wash of mocha. The tannins are astringent and seem to cut the fruit short. —P.G.

**abv:** NA **Price:** \$25

**85 Sweet Valley 2008 Merlot (Walla Walla Valley).** Light fruit flavors of watermelon and strawberry, along with some thin black cherry and cola flavors are what you'll find here. This is pleasant and drinkable, but not a wine to cellar or match with any really spicy foods. A good quaffer. —P.G.

**abv:** NA **Price:** \$30



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## SANGIOVESE

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**88** K Vintners 2008 Guido Sangiovese (Walla Walla Valley). From the Lefore Vineyard in the cobblestone-strewn region known as The Rocks. This is home to some of the oldest Sangio in the valley; planted in 1997. Lovely aromatics with a weave of wild berry, leaf, and sour cherry. The tart fruit is set against rather sharp, herbal tannins. —P.G.  
abv: 14.5% Price: \$40

**87** Trio Vintners 2008 Sangiovese (Walla Walla Valley). Light berry fruit, pleasingly spiced, with the natural acidity of Sangiovese and a light touch with the tannins. It all makes for a light and very pretty wine. —P.G.  
abv: 13.7% Price: \$20

**86** Le Chateau 2008 Sangiovese (Columbia Valley). This shakes off a slightly sweaty nose and opens into a soft, round, pleasantly fruity wine with strawberry, mint and spice. There is a hint of new wood, and a mild, almost floral finish. —P.G.  
abv: NA Price: \$18

**86** Locati Cellars 2008 Sangiovese (Columbia Valley). Round, forward and fruity, this pleasant red does not scream out its varietal stamp, but it's a perfectly fine quaffer, a bit tart and short in the finish. —P.G.  
abv: NA Price: \$25

**85** Arbor Crest 2009 Wahluke Slope Vineyard Sangiovese (Wahluke Slope). The wine seems a bit disjointed, as if the fruit ripened unevenly. Prune and fig accents compete with some green notes, and the tannins are unobtrusive to the point of disappearing. Maybe just an awkward phase? —P.G.  
abv: 13.9% Price: \$16

**85** DaMa 2007 Sangiovese (Walla Walla Valley). The fruit is prune-y and the finish tannic. There are big flavors, but the palate impression is of a somewhat disjointed mix of ripe/unripe fruit, earthy tannins, and a streak of leather. —P.G.  
abv: NA Price: \$25

**85** Hawkins Cellars 2009 Sangiovese (Columbia Valley). Quite light, with tart rhubarb and strawberry fruit. There's more than a hint of peppery herb, and a tart, quick finish. —P.G.  
abv: 14% Price: \$25

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## SYRAH

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**98** Charles Smith 2008 Royal City Syrah (Columbia Valley). An Amaro-like mix of bitters and herbs; this is exceptionally dense and dark. The fruit is a grace note; the big flavors come from herb, earth, rock, barrel and more. Licorice, baking spices, smoke, black cherry, Bourbon barrel, and on it goes. Huge and dense and seemingly endless. —P.G.  
abv: 15% Price: \$140

**96** K Vintners 2007 The Hustler Syrah (Walla Walla Valley). Only the second time The Hustler has been made, this spent 38 months in barrel. All

the fruit is sourced from the Morrison Lane vineyard. Port-like and amazingly concentrated, it's about as far as a dry wine can go and show fruit that is not buried in new oak. Here the fruit is a dark blend of berries and cassis; there is a dense layer of chocolate and earth underneath, with a finish loaded with baking spices. —P.G.  
abv: 16% Price: \$140

**94** K Vintners 2008 Northridge Vineyard Syrah (Wahluke Slope). This may be the quintessential site among the extensive Milbrandt vineyards that produce much of the K Vintners Syrah lineup. The Northridge bottling has amazing purity and concentration, with a beguiling mix of deep berry fruits and gravelly minerality. Supple power, muscular and dense. *Editors' Choice.* —P.G.  
abv: 15.5% Price: \$35

**94** K Vintners 2008 Phil Lane Syrah (Walla Walla Valley). A deep and compact wine with Syrah fruit styled with a Cabernet-like verticality, this layers ripe berry fruit with streaks of graphite, ash and rock. The flavors persist through a lingering, super clean finish with the balance and acidity to age. What are initially tightly wound subtleties of herb and spice may well expand into nuanced complexity over the next decade or more. *Cellar Selection.* —P.G.  
abv: 15.5% Price: \$70

**94** Otis Kenyon 2008 Stellar Vineyard Syrah (Walla Walla Valley). From the estate vineyard, located in the cobblestone-rich area known as The Rocks, this cellar-worthy effort is complex and riveting. Berries and citrus, juicy and tart, cling to the palate and pull through to a lingering finish. Pure and deep all the way through. *Cellar Selection.* —P.G.  
abv: 14.2% Price: \$38

**93** Coeur d'Alene Cellars 2007 Alder Ridge Vineyard Syrah (Horse Heaven Hills). Deep, dark and dense, this striking Syrah opens with intense aromas of berry, cherry and cassis fruit. There's a compelling integration of barrel scents and flavors—toast, chocolate and coffee—and a lingering, silky finish. *Editors' Choice.* —P.G.  
abv: 14.8% Price: \$40

**93** K Vintners 2008 Morrison Lane Syrah (Walla Walla Valley). With its excellent concentration of pure fruit power, this is like taking your mouth through a 100 yard dash of raspberry, blueberry and black cherry fruit, right down the heart of the throat. Along the way you find a tight wrapping of rock and espresso, but it's the snappy, sappy fruit that really shines here. Great length. —P.G.  
abv: 15.5% Price: \$45

**93** K Vintners 2008 Pheasant Vineyard Syrah (Wahluke Slope). First you smell chocolate, then it quickly shows a piercing minerality, with tart boysenberry and pomegranate fruit. Dense without being heavy, it has compact layering that shows especially in the aromatics. A subtle, refined, elegant wine that does not feel at all like its 15% alcohol. *Editors' Choice.* —P.G.  
abv: 15% Price: \$35

**93** K Vintners 2008 Sundance Vineyard The Deal Syrah (Wahluke Slope). The Deal is the real deal—Syrah with all the peppery herb and earthy fruit flavor that this grape can provide. A smoked ham/cured meat component emerges as flavors weave into the back of the throat; nicely integrated. Threads of herb and dried leaf continue into the finish, along with a streak of pure cherry. *Editors' Choice.* —P.G.  
abv: 15.5% Price: \$35

**93** McCrea Cellars 2006 Ciel du Cheval Vineyard Syrah (Red Mountain). Almost instantly identifiable as the Ciel du Cheval Syrah, this big and spicy wine offers berries galore. Though held back an extra couple of years before release, it has lost none of its freshness or vitality. Smooth and long, it rolls into a generous wash of butterscotch and chocolate, dotted with spice and finished with a mineral base. *Editors' Choice.* —P.G.  
abv: 14.8% Price: \$36

**92** Arbor Crest 2009 Three Vineyards Syrah (Columbia Valley). A gorgeous wine, dense with flavor. Smooth and plummy, it's loaded with thick streaks of licorice, chocolate, baking spices and coffee liqueur. Long and flowing, it just seduces from the first sip to the last swallow. *Editors' Choice.* —P.G.  
abv: 13.8% Price: \$20

**92** Gordon Brothers 2007 Syrah (Columbia Valley). Impressive, full-flavored and smooth, this rich and ripe Syrah offers classic, full-on varietal flavors. A mix of plush red fruits with generous acidity and streaks of roasted coffee and mocha, the wine just goes and goes. *Editors' Choice.* —P.G.  
abv: 13.7% Price: \$17

**91** Cadaretta 2008 Syrah (Columbia Valley). The best Syrah so far from Cadaretta, this pure varietal is three-quarters Pepper Bridge and one-quarter Stone Tree Vineyard fruit. The purity and focus are compelling. Deep boysenberry fruit is highlighted with black olive and dusty coffee. Tight and expressive. —P.G.  
abv: 14.8% Price: \$35

**91** Guardian Cellars 2008 Stillwater Creek Vineyard Syrah (Columbia Valley). You'll find great purity of fruit in this 100% Syrah, aged in 50% new French oak. Berries and plums fill in a gorgeous midpalate, then streaks of spice and coffee kick in, with a lovely vein of cured meat. In short, a classic cool-climate Syrah, beautifully rendered. —P.G.  
abv: NA Price: \$30

**91** Maison Bleue 2009 Boushey Vineyard Liberté Syrah (Yakima Valley). This wine requires significant breathing time and/or decanting. At first tight and slightly disjointed, it comes together into a concentrated and complex wine with a weave of violets, berries, black currant, licorice and chocolate flavors. —P.G.  
abv: 14.7% Price: \$45

**91** McCrea Cellars 2006 Cuvée Orleans Syrah (Yakima Valley). Broadly fruity at first, this turns a little loose-knit, like a Grateful Dead jam. It's

## **BUYING**guide

compelling but not terribly tight; it meanders into leaf and tea, then chocolate, then back to the light and pretty red fruits. —P.G.

abv: 14.8%

Price: \$40

**91 Saviah Cellars 2008 Syrah (Walla Walla Valley).** For full review see page 7.

abv: 14.1%

Price: \$32

**90 :Nota Bene 2008 Syrah (Columbia Valley).** At first a bit tart and astringent, this young and tannic wine broadens out with breathing time. It's tannic and dark-inflected, with licorice, espresso and smoky barrel toast filling in the ample finish. —P.G.

abv: 15.5%

Price: \$25

**90 K Vintners 2008 Milbrandt Syrah (Wahluke Slope).** The Milbrandt bottling is all Sundance Vineyard fruit, cropped a little higher, and macerated with fewer stems for a shorter time. It is a fine introduction to the K Vintners style; showing good density in a moderately ripe format. The fruit is brambly and tart, with some earth and stem flavors, good balance, and a hint of the grape's gamy aspect. —P.G.

abv: 15%

Price: \$30

**90 Otis Kenyon 2008 Syrah (Walla Walla Valley).** Another fine Syrah from Otis Kenyon Winemaker Dave Stephenson, this full-flavored wine shows clear varietal character. Tasty fruit flavors of blueberry and boysenberry are highlighted with baking spices, moving into a smooth finish with a milk chocolate kick. —P.G.

abv: 14%

Price: \$30

**90 Skylite Cellars 2007 Minick Vineyard Syrah (Yakima Valley).** Beautifully aromatic, this pure varietal Syrah from a top-drawer Yakima valley site has round and fleshy fruit, laced with a streak of licorice and finished with a dollop of mocha/espresso. —P.G.

abv: NA

Price: \$28

**90 Watermill 2008 Praying Mantis Syrah (Walla Walla Valley).** Don't be fooled by the unusual label—a bright green praying mantis on a plain brown background. The Praying Mantis bottling offers ripe, estate-grown fruit at the core of a juicy young wine. Tart and delicious, it's a lively bowl of cherries and berries. —P.G.

abv: NA

Price: \$30

**89 Abeja 2009 Syrah (Walla Walla Valley).** Right after opening this sends up lush and overwhelming scents of pretty new toasty barrels. Let it breathe and the fruit fills in; a mix of blackberry and cassis with plenty of coffee, cocoa, mocha and olive. A big wine that needs a couple more years in the bottle to pull itself together. —P.G.

abv: 14.8%

Price: \$38

**89 K Vintners 2008 Clifton Vineyard Syrah (Wahluke Slope).** The Clifton is holding back at the moment, its tannins feel a little scrapey and the fruit is showing a cool-climate aspect, although the Wahluke is generally one of Washington's hot spots. Gravelly and dry, with a long finish that somehow holds your interest long after the fruit has faded. —P.G.

abv: 15.5%

Price: \$35

**89 Plumb Cellars 2007 Syrah (Columbia Valley).** Drink this while it is still showing its youthful fruit. Black and purple berries abound, with excellent depth, some herbal grace notes and a spicy, lengthy finish. —P.G.

abv: NA

Price: \$24

**88 :Nota Bene 2008 Ciel du Cheval Vineyard Syrah (Red Mountain).** Tart and astringent, this young wine shows good structure but remains a bit tight. Light red fruits, a streak of citrus, and a strong base of cement and chalk-like minerality, this has persistence and complexity. It needs more cellar time to fully express itself. —P.G.

abv: 15%

Price: \$35

**88 Fort Walla Walla 2007 Syrah (Walla Walla Valley).** At first this Syrah, sourced entirely from Pepper Bridge vineyard fruit, seems to fall short in the finish. There are some fruit flavors that skirt along the edge of prune and raisin, and a nice chocolaty coating. But highlights of cured meat add interest and complexity to the finish as the wine opens up. Drink soon. —P.G.

abv: 14.3%

Price: \$28

**88 K Vintners 2008 M.C.K. Syrah (Washington).** In this vintage the M.C.K. (Motor City Kitty) Syrah is sourced from the Milbrandt's Talcott Vineyard, though not labeled as such. It's herbal and fresh, with light and pretty berry fruits. A strong citrus component has been somewhat muted, and this wine is drinking well right now. —P.G.

abv: 15.5%

Price: \$30

**87 Chateau Ste. Michelle 2008 Syrah (Columbia Valley).** Co-fermented with Viognier (for the first time at Ste. Michelle), this aims for a brighter, softer style of Syrah. It's plenty soft, pleasantly accessible, and lightly toasty. The smoothness seems to have eliminated some of the brightness, the hills and valleys that make Syrah so distinctive in Washington. —P.G.

abv: 13.5%

Price: \$13

**87 Chateau Walla Walla 2008 Syrah (Walla Walla Valley).** A big and oaky style, liquorous and full-flavored from the start. This is spot-on varietally, the fruit sourced from the Zerba Vineyards, and has a nice run through the midpalate with purple berry fruits and plenty of new oak. It turns a little chalky in the finish. —P.G.

abv: NA

Price: \$40

**87 Coeur d'Alene Cellars 2008 Syrah (Columbia Valley).** Pleasant red fruits awash in chocolaty oak craft an accessible, broadly open Syrah. Though it seems a bit generic, it is balanced and tasty; a good bottle for near-term drinking with simple grilled meats. —P.G.

abv: 14.3%

Price: \$28

**85 Hawkins Cellars 2009 Syrah (Columbia Valley).** An ordinary effort, with tart fruit just approaching ripeness. Sour cherries fade quickly into a thin finish. —P.G.

abv: 14.5%

Price: \$25

## TEMPRANILLO

**91 Gordon Brothers 2008 Tempranillo (Columbia Valley).** It's a shame that there are only 75 cases of this Tempranillo available; it is a compelling wine that suggests a bright future for this grape in the Columbia Valley. The complex mix of earth, bark, cassis and berry, densely concentrated and detailed with chocolate and mocha notes, is flat-out delicious. Tannins are a bit grainy, with a green tea edge. —P.G.

abv: 13.4%

Price: \$65

**91 K Vintners 2008 El Jefe En Chamberlin Vineyard Tempranillo (Walla Walla Valley).** The blend includes 20% Cabernet Sauvignon. The En Chamberlin Vineyard predictably shows a generous dose of the Cayuse funk, along with solid and deep flavors of earth, stem, herb and wild brambly fruits. It all comes together in a tight and spicy wine with more funk than Spanish character. Unique and precise, with lingering flavors. —P.G.

abv: 14.5%

Price: \$60

**89 Watermill 2007 Tempranillo (Columbia Valley).** This tasty effort has very tart red fruit set in sharp acids, with highlights of spices and seeds. Still quite young, with the acidity and structure to improve over the next few years. —P.G.

abv: NA

Price: \$28

**85 Zerba Cellars 2008 Tempranillo (Walla Walla Valley).** This opens green and herbal, with a disconnected mix of unripe and grapy fruit flavors. The new barrel aging brings toast and butter, but behind that the wine is still disjointed and the fruit flavors all up front. —P.G.

abv: 14.4%

Price: \$38

## OTHER RED WINES

**90 K Vintners 2008 The Boy Grenache (Walla Walla Valley).** From the (Cayuse) Armada Vineyard, the blend includes 8% Syrah. Very floral, with lovely scents of lily and spice. It's all fruit, with no new wood, and some whole cluster flavors of bark and stem. All nicely integrated and subtle, adding texture and detail. There is a streak of balsamic, and tart berry fruit flavors with a powerful, peppery, earthy component from the vineyard. —P.G.

abv: NA

Price: \$50

**90 Maison Bleue 2009 Boushey Vineyard Le Midi Grenache (Yakima Valley).** Pretty and forward, this lovely wine bursts forth with raspberry and sweet cherry tomato fruit flavors. A slight mintiness can also be detected, all within the context of an impeccably balanced, firm, pleasingly acidic young red wine. —P.G.

abv: 14.5%

Price: \$35

**89 McCrea Cellars 2008 Mourvèdre (Yakima Valley).** Sourced from three excellent Yakima Valley vineyards, this Mourvèdre-dominated, Rhône-style blend has a forward, fruity mix of flavors, medium concentration and a peppery finish. The tannins are still a bit hard, but the overall balance is all in proportion. Give it extra time to breathe open. —P.G.

abv: 14.9%

Price: \$28

**86** :Nota Bene 2008 Stillwater Creek Vineyard Mourvèdre (Columbia Valley). A vineyard change in 2008 moves the source of the grapes north from Red Mountain to the Royal Slope. Young vines yield rather tight, bare flavors, with sweet grain and vanilla components contributed by the oak barrel (just one barrel was produced). —P.G.  
abv: 14.7% Price: \$30

**85** Locati Cellars 2008 Barbera (Columbia Valley). Tart and tight, this young wine is still pulling itself together. The tart raspberry fruit turns quite sour, with a streak of Band-aid, then an unintegrated wash of caramel. —P.G.  
abv: NA Price: \$25

**85** Zerba Cellars 2008 Petit Verdot (Walla Walla Valley). Vintages matter, and the differences between the 2008 and the 2007 Zerba Petit Verdots are dramatic. This seems sour and barely ripe, with a streak of asparagus and stemmy tannins. —P.G.  
abv: 14.6% Price: \$38

**83** Le Chateau 2008 Barbera (Columbia Valley). A raw, rough, oaky flavor overwhelms the light and simple red fruit. Disjointed, with a bitter streak in the finish. —P.G.  
abv: NA Price: \$27

**83** Tertulia Cellars 2008 Phinny Hill Vineyard Carmenère (Horse Heaven Hills). This Carmenère from an excellent vineyard is listed at a whopping 14.7% alcohol, but the nose and the palate do not comply. It is aggressively vegetal, with thin, canned pea flavors. —P.G.  
abv: 14.7% Price: \$35

## WASHINGTON WHITES

### CHARDONNAY

**91** Saviah Cellars 2009 Chardonnay (Columbia Valley). Sourced as previously from the Stillwater Creek vineyard, this is a substantial, mouth-filling Chardonnay. At first tight and aggressively oaky, it softens up with air time and reveals hidden complexity. Lanolin, vanilla custard, lemon meringue and a mix of stone and tropical fruits keep it interesting. This is a Chardonnay that could improve for another five years or more. *Editors' Choice.* —P.G.  
abv: NA Price: \$25

**90** Chateau Ste. Michelle 2008 Ethos Reserve Chardonnay (Columbia Valley). The price on the Ethos Reserve has dropped significantly, making it an especially good value for a full-on, toasty and buttery Chardonnay. A harmonious mélange of tree fruits and tropical nuances—papaya and banana stand out—with a smooth and luscious mouthfeel. *Editors' Choice.* —P.G.  
abv: 14.5% Price: \$25

**90** DaMa 2010 Chardonnay (Columbia Valley). A switch of vineyard sources—to Sagemoor and Conner Lee—has led to the best Chardonnay yet from DaMa. Rich, full and fleshy, this is a riot of

stone fruits. In the mouth it's smooth and luscious, with a pleasing, textural finish. —P.G.  
abv: NA Price: \$21

**89** Gordon Brothers 2009 Chardonnay (Columbia Valley). Is there a better value in Chardonnay than this? Not if you love wine done in a dark gold, oily, buttery, oaky style. This is not a wine to cellar, but it certainly is a wine to savor. Green and yellow apple fruit manages to cut through all the buttery flavors. *Best Buy.* —P.G.  
abv: 13.7% Price: \$10

**87** Arbor Crest 2010 Conner Lee Vineyard Chardonnay (Columbia Valley). Very ripe, somewhat volatile scents mark this bright and rich wine that will most likely split taster opinions right down the middle. Blocky pear and peach fruit keeps the mid-palate full, then quickly fades. Score could improve with further bottle age. —P.G.  
abv: 13.5% Price: \$18

**87** Chateau Ste. Michelle 2010 Chardonnay (Columbia Valley). This well-crafted Chardonnay opens sharp and spicy, with light but juicy fruit. Flavors of clean apple and pear run into hints of peach, then resolve with a creamy finish. —P.G.  
abv: 14% Price: \$13

**87** Le Chateau 2010 Chardonnay (Columbia Valley). Apple and citrus fruit carries a light and refreshing hint of wintergreen. This is a solid, fruity, no-frills, chillable style of Chardonnay. —P.G.  
abv: NA Price: \$25

**86** Chateau Ste. Michelle 2009 Indian Wells Chardonnay (Columbia Valley). Smooth and oaky, with a soft and accessible appeal, this is a more limited production offering than the Chateau's regular Columbia Valley Chardonnay. Though undeniably charming, it thins out quickly and does not have the vivid complexity of its sibling. —P.G.  
abv: 13.5% Price: \$18

### WHITE BLENDS

**91** Kontos Cellars 2010 LeeVeLooLee Gosamer White (Columbia Valley). An intriguing blend—half Viognier, the rest a mix of Chardonnay, Sémillon and Grenache Blanc. It could easily turn generic, but does not; instead it is a snappy mouthful of stone fruits, spice, and refreshing acidity, well-defined and precise. —P.G.  
abv: 13.7% Price: \$22

**88** Rôtie Cellars 2010 Southern White (Washington). Half Viognier, 30% Roussanne and 20% Marsanne, this well-crafted Rhône-style blend is spicy with a bright mix of citrus fruits. Lemon/lime and orange scents and flavors dominate, with a fresh, forward palate impression. —P.G.  
abv: NA Price: \$28

**88** Saviah Cellars 2010 Star Meadows White (Columbia Valley). A 60/40 Sauvignon Blanc/Sémillon blend, done in the Bordeaux style. Fermented in neutral oak, aged sur lie, and left in the barrels for an

other half year, the wine is lightly toasty with steely fruit flavors and a firm, solid mouthfeel. —P.G.  
abv: 13.4% Price: \$20

## RIESLING

**93** Chateau Ste. Michelle 2010 Cold Creek Vineyard Riesling (Columbia Valley). In 2010 the Cold Creek Riesling is actually a touch sweeter than Eroica, with unusually low alcohol as well. Compact and at the same time full-bodied, this mesh of primary citrus and stone fruits is marvelous, but clearly the best is yet to come. It will reward cellaring! *Best Buy.* —P.G.  
abv: 12.5% Price: \$15

**92** Chateau Ste. Michelle & Dr. Loosen 2010 Eroica Riesling (Columbia Valley). For full review see page 5. *Cellar Selection.*  
abv: 12.5% Price: \$20

**91** Chateau Ste. Michelle 2010 Dry Riesling (Columbia Valley). For full review see page 12. *Best Buy.*  
abv: 13% Price: \$9

**91** The Jack 2010 Riesling (Columbia Valley). Delightfully spicy and fresh, this bright and lively Riesling shows a hint of sweetness from residual sugar just a bit under 2%. But the juicy flavors of citrus and stone, flesh and rind, really carry the day. *Best Buy.* —P.G.  
abv: 12.9% Price: \$15

**90** Chateau Ste. Michelle 2010 Riesling (Columbia Valley). For full review see page 12. *Best Buy.*  
abv: 11% Price: \$9

**88** Seven Hills 2010 Riesling (Columbia Valley). A blend of Evergreen vineyard fruit and old-vine Riesling sourced from a pair of Yakima Valley vineyards, this feels drier than its 1.8% residual sugar. Citrus and citrus rind flavors make for a tart, grapefruit style with some bite to the finish. It has the heft to take on a range of spicy foods. —P.G.  
abv: 10.9% Price: \$14

## SAUVIGNON BLANC

**90** SuLei Cellars 2010 Sauvignon Blanc (Columbia Valley). Fermented in stainless steel, then aged in a mix of neutral oak and stainless steel barrels, this single-vineyard, 100% varietal Sauvignon Blanc is racy and bone dry, a true Loire Valley style. Classic varietal flavors of gooseberry, lemon/lime and slate, with a bit of spritz to liven it up. —P.G.  
abv: 13.5% Price: \$18

**88** Chateau Ste. Michelle 2010 Sauvignon Blanc (Columbia Valley). Almost indistinguishable from its companion Horse Heaven Vineyard bottling, the Columbia Valley Sauvignon Blanc also clocks in at a modest 12.5% alcohol. It offers light, succinct, pure varietal flavors, on the cool side with green



apple, peavine, and a bracing minerality. **Best Buy.** —P.G.

abv: 12.5% Price: \$13

**88 Chateau Ste. Michelle 2010 Horse Heaven Vineyard Sauvignon Blanc (Horse Heaven Hills).** A return to pure, single vineyard Sauvignon Blanc. With alcohol at 12.5% this dry wine is quite European in style. Elegant, lively and fresh, with a cool mix of cucumber, melon and green apple fruit flavors. —P.G.

abv: 12.5% Price: \$15

**88 Gordon Brothers 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Columbia Valley).** From organically grown, estate vineyard grapes, this light, subtle wine has a strong acid underpinning. Citrus fruits and a suggestion of fresh pear are streaked with vanilla wafer. —P.G.

abv: 13.5% Price: \$11

**88 Le Chateau 2010 Castle White Sauvignon Blanc (Columbia Valley).** This Castle White is a fresh and well-made Sauvignon Blanc, with just a splash (2%) of Sémillon in the blend. Crisp and grassy, in a mouth-pleasing, true-to-varietal style. —P.G.

abv: NA Price: \$15

## VIIGNIER

**93 Charles Smith 2009 Stoneridge Vineyard Viognier (Columbia Valley).** A Burgundian take on Viognier, barrel fermented in 30% new French oak, put through M-L, and aged 18 months in barrel. Predictably dark and smooth, with a rich mix of soft, ripe stone fruit and barrel flavors. It's a bold style, showing plenty of toast and oak, but also concentrated and peachy, with lemon verbena, Key lime and a hint of honey. —P.G.

abv: NA Price: \$50

**92 K Vintners 2010 Viognier (Columbia Valley).** The fruit comes from the cool climate Den Hoed vineyard. It was barrel fermented in neutral French oak Burgundy barrels, yielding a racy, razor-sharp, spicy, detailed, delicious wine. Lovely fruit is highlighted with peppery notes, running the gamut from cucumber on through to tropical flavors. Ripe, full, lingering. **Editors' Choice.** —P.G.

abv: NA Price: \$22

**88 Abeja 2010 Viognier (Walla Walla Valley).** Estate-grown, barrel-fermented, and richly extracted, this young Viognier has not yet shed its sharp edges. The fruit is generous and compact, a mix of peach, apricot and pineapple, with liquorous barrel flavors dominating. —P.G.

abv: 14.2% Price: \$28

**88 Maison Bleue 2010 Notre Vie Viognier (Yakima Valley).** Tart, cool-climate fruit opens with scents of vanilla and buttered nuts, then gracefully expands into green fruit flavors of citrus and white peach. There is a refreshing, underlying minerality, and overall elegant balance. —P.G.

abv: 13.5% Price: \$25

**88 Seven Hills 2010 Viognier (Columbia Valley).** A toasty bouquet of citrus and peach showcases the fermentation in new French oak barrels. The peachy fruit carries accents of citrus and rind, with excellent penetration into a lingering finish. —P.G.

abv: 14.2% Price: \$20

**87 DaMa 2009 Viognier (Columbia Valley).** This is a difficult wine to evaluate. It's a dark gold, almost tawny, and definitely oxidized. Don't look for fresh fruit, but you will find deep, spicy, lingering complexity with dry, dusty, Muscat-like flavors. Two bottles tasted; similar results. —P.G.

abv: NA Price: \$21

## OTHER WHITE WINES

**89 Chateau Ste. Michelle 2010 Gewürztraminer (Columbia Valley).** An eminently quaffable style of Gewürztraminer, this puts the fresh fruit flavors front and center, with floral highlights enriching the nose and the finish. Crisp and clean, it sings out for pad Thai. **Best Buy.** —P.G.

abv: 12% Price: \$9

**88 Maison Bleue 2010 Boushey Vineyard Petite Joie Marsanne (Yakima Valley).** Whole-cluster pressed and fermented in French oak barrels, about one third new, this pure Marsanne is a deep gold, and scented with buttery, oily oak and vanilla. It's full in the mouth, bright and high-toned, with a mix of stone fruits. —P.G.

abv: 13.9% Price: \$35

**82 Locati Cellars 2009 Dry Orange Muscat (Columbia Valley).** Good idea, but the execution isn't there. Watery, thin and charmless; like orange candy diluted with lemon juice. —P.G.

abv: NA Price: \$18

## DESSERT WINE

**94 ArborBrook Vineyards 2008 Sydney Sémillon (Red Mountain).** Washington's Klipsun Vineyard is the source for this Sauternes-style dessert wine. Harvested in late November at 38.5 brix, then aged for 18 months in a mix of new and second year barrels, it is a thoroughly delicious and decadent dessert wine. Lush and thick without being fat or tiring, it's bursting with butterscotch and candied tropical fruits. **Editors' Choice.** —P.G.

abv: NA Price: \$28/375 ml

## BRAZIL

### RED WINES

**88 Miolo 2008 Sesmarias (Campanha).** Concentrated, bullish, healthy and ripe, but also rugged, tannic and tough in the mouth. This blend of six grapes brings big-time fruit in the blackberry and plum category along with copious spice. For Brazil it's on the right path. But it's still a bruising wine with a high price tag. —M.S.

abv: 14% Price: \$100

**86 Vinícola Miolo 2004 Quinta do Seival Castas Portuguesas (Campanha).** This blend of Touriga Nacional, Alfocheiro and Tinta Roriz is an authentic stab at Portuguese-style wine. It is roasted and leathery on the nose, with earthy baked fruit flavors and tons of leather. Shows immense rustic fruit the more it expands, but also some cooked qualities and heft. An interesting wine that's worth a go. —GM Miolo, USA. —M.S.

abv: 13.5% Price: \$20

**86 Vinícola Miolo 2005 Terroir Merlot (Vale dos Vinhedos).** Not an inexpensive taste of Brazil despite the one-liter bottle, but this is about as refined and worldly as you're going to find from the land of samba. The nose is roasted and solid, with baked berry aromas that draw you in. Coffee, raisin, pepper and plenty of fruit work the palate, and the finish is long and leathery. One of the better wines from Brazil that we've tried. Wonderful Ethnic Imports. —M.S.

abv: 13.5% Price: \$35/1 L

**85 Lidio Carraro 2006 Quorum Grande Vin-dima (Vale dos Vinhedos).** Heavy and earthy on the bouquet, with a roasted quality and aromas of prune and raisin. Comes across wide and soft, with baked, chocolaty, black fruit flavors. Turns sweet but also mildly bitter on a blackened finish. Meaty and tannic as well. Winebow. —M.S.

abv: 14.4% Price: \$65

**85 Pizzato 2005 Conventus (Vale dos Vinhedos).** Powerful and packed with heavy berry and plum aromas that are rustic and leathery. Tight in the mouth, with a strong tannic framework and roasted black fruit flavors with pepper on the backside. Dark and peppery on the finish. Merlot, Tannat and Cabernet. Metropolis Wine Merchants, Inc. —M.S.

abv: 13.5% Price: \$25

**85 Pizzato 2005 DNA 99 Single Vineyard Merlot (Vale dos Vinhedos).** Prune and metallic aromas are not fully integrated and fresh but improve with airing. The palate is heavy and tannic, a touch abrasive in feel, with big berry flavors that hammer away due to fierce tannins. Comes on big with berry fruit but always feels rough. Metropolis Wine Merchants, Inc. —M.S.

abv: 13.5% Price: \$50

**85 Vinícola Miolo 2005 Family Vineyards Merlot (Vale dos Vinhedos).** If you're ready to jump head-first into the emerging but sketchy realm of Brazilian table wine, then Merlot is a good place to start. This one has baked, earthy aromas of clay, spice and leather. The palate is fruity and saturated, with deep cherry, berry, coffee and prune flavors. Good in its class. Imported by GM Miolo, USA. Wonderful Ethnic Imports. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

abv: 13.5% Price: \$10

**85 Vinícola Miolo 2004 Lote 43 Cabernet Sauvignon-Merlot (Vale dos Vinhedos).** A 50-50 blend of Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot that ranks high atop Miolo's pyramid of wines. It has typical Brazilian rusticity, with a roasted, earthy bouquet. Flavors of plum and berry are a little baked and raw, but

the feel is chewy and deep, with pretty good texture. GM Miolo, USA. —M.S.  
abv: 12.5% Price: \$27

**83** **Château Lacave 2002 Reserva Cabernet Sauvignon-Merlot (Serra Gaúcha).** This Cabernet Sauvignon-Merlot blend almost has enough of the right stuff to rate higher, but in the end the wine's tart cherry fruit and sharp acidity is just too unfriendly. Like so many Brazilian wines, it's trying to be more than the country's terroir can give. So the end result is mediocre. Towar Incorporated. —M.S.  
abv: 12% Price: \$20

**83** **Salton 2006 Talento (Campanha).** Hard and herbal on the nose, with cherry and a note of wet cement or chemical. Narrow and fairly choppy and tannic in the mouth, with forceful cherry, plum and buttery oak flavors. Sweetens up with time but remains tannic and hard. A & M Imports. —M.S.  
abv: 13% Price: \$26

**82** **Aurora Cellars 2004 Proprietary Red (Serra Gaúcha).** Bell pepper and sharp red fruit aromas provide a shaky start, which is followed by cranberry, tart cherry and other pointed flavors. The feel is racy and tight, with gritty acids. Airing does improve it somewhat. Tasted twice; this is a review of the better bottle. Cabernet, Merlot, Cab Franc and Carménère is the blend. From Brazil. Atomic Import and Export. —M.S.  
abv: 13% Price: \$10

**82** **Vinícola Miolo 2005 Family Vineyards Cabernet Sauvignon (Vale dos Vinhedos).** A little warm and unctuous on the nose, but then rather slight and sheering on the palate. The flavor profile is in the red, sharp zone, but nothing from Brazil will ever be razor sharp due to the tropical terroir. Finishes long and rubbery, with a fiery, roasted lasting impression. GM Miolo, USA. —M.S.  
abv: 13.5% Price: \$10

**81** **Casa Valduga 2007 Gran Reserva Cabernet Sauvignon (Vale dos Vinhedos).** A weird Cabernet with unfamiliar, odd aromas. Tight as nails and sheering, with sour plum and incongruent buttery oak flavors. Barrel influence shows up on the finish. Needs polish and improvement. Altamira Imports, LLC. —M.S.  
abv: 13% Price: \$36

**81** **Casa Perini 2007 Marselan (Vale Trentino).** Smells foresty and like tree bark, with a hint of floral berry fruit. Thick, syrupy and jammy feeling, with rooty, herbal flavors of baked fruits and brown sugar. Both sweet and hot on the finish. Uva Oliva Inc. (Peninsula Beverage LLC). —M.S.  
abv: 13% Price: \$15

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## SPARKLING WINES

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**84** **Brazilian Soul NV Moscatel (Serra Gaúcha).** Legitimately Moscato-like even if it's more candied and foamy than the Italian original. Gardenia, lychee and lime aromas set up soft, sweet green

fruit flavors. This isn't complex but it's clean and true to the style. Monsieur Touton Selection Ltd. —M.S.  
abv: 7.5% Price: \$10

**84** **Cave Geisse 2009 Brut (Pinto Bandeira).** Soda-like on the nose, with breadly, toasty accents. It's rough and foamy on the palate, with cider and dry citrus flavors. Lasting on the finish, but still it's pithy and grapefruity. —M.S.  
abv: 12.5% Price: \$25

**81** **Casa Valduga NV Brut 130 (Vale dos Vinhedos).** Grassy apple aromas are acceptable but not convincing. Blah in the mouth, with a light feel and pinchy, cidery flavors. Pithy on the finish. Altamira Imports, LLC. —M.S.  
abv: 13% Price: \$30

**80** **Brazilian Soul NV Brut (Serra Gaúcha).** Grass and clover aromas lead to a cidery palate with mustard and vinegar notes. More funk than quality here; runs along the edge of what's acceptable. Monsieur Touton Selection Ltd. —M.S.  
abv: 12.5% Price: \$12

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## WHITE WINE

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**80** **Miolo 2009 Cuvée Giuseppe Chardonnay (Vale dos Vinhedos).** Hits with barrel resin and not much else. Feels screechy and shrill, with a swath of wood tannin. Acidity pushes it along in the mouth, but this is really all about resinous wood. —M.S.  
abv: 13% Price: \$25

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## PERU

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## RED WINES

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**86** **Tacama 2008 Don Manuel Tannat (Ica).** Concentrated and serious, but still a rustic, tough driller of a Tannat. Smells like wild herbs, plum and lemony oak, then it's tight and tannic in the mouth. Tastes minerally and brickly, with black cherry, lemon drop and bitter chocolate. Crusty on the finish, where the oak is pronounced. Needs food; might soften in a few years. Vidalco International, LLC. —M.S.  
abv: 14.5% Price: \$30

**86** **Tacama 2008 Sinfonía Tannat-Malbec Petit Verdot (Ica).** Earthy, warm and ripe on the bouquet, with a baked element but also fruit that holds its form. Full but not overdone in the mouth, with restrained berry, plum and caramel flavors. Not pushy; subdued on the finish. Petit Verdot, Malbec and Tannat. Vidalco International, LLC. —M.S.  
abv: 14% Price: \$20

**85** **Tacama 2008 Halcón de la Viña Malbec (Ica).** Roasted and earthy smelling, with a pinch of iodine and even a whiff of bacon or ham. Rich, full and a touch sticky on the tongue, with baked berry and chocolate flavors. Mellow and sweet on the back end. 100% Malbec. Vidalco International, LLC. —M.S.  
abv: 13% Price: \$15

**84** **Tacama 2008 Quantum Petit Verdot (Ica).** Heavy on the bouquet, with baked, rustic black fruit aromas that turn cheesy and leathery with airing. Chunky but layered in the mouth, with thick, ripe black cherry and blackberry flavors. Sweet, lightly herbal and heavy on the finish. Vidalco International, LLC. —M.S.  
abv: 13.5% Price: \$20

**83** **Tacama 2009 Selección Especial (Ica).** Sweet, pasty aromas of plum jam and cherry are candied but not offputting. Wide and sticky on the palate, then baked and sweet tasting, with a simple, rather weak finish. Tannat and Petit Verdot. Vidalco International, LLC. —M.S.  
abv: 13.5% Price: \$13

**82** **Tacama 2007 Terroix (Ica).** Rubbery smelling, with red berry and plum aromas in the background. Simple and not all that structured for what amounts to a pricey Peruvian offering; feels reduced and candied, with sweet plum flavors. Highly candied on the chunky finish. Vidalco International, LLC. —M.S.  
abv: 14% Price: \$24

**81** **Tacama 2009 Gran Tinto (Ica).** Hot and leathery up front, with stewy notes and candied red fruit aromas. The palate features smacking tannic bite along with foxy-tasting red fruit. Turns medicinal on the finish. Vidalco International, LLC. —M.S.  
abv: 13% Price: \$10

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## WHITE WINES

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**83** **Tacama 2010 Blanco de Blancos (Ica).** Oily apple and peach aromas show no glaring faults. Round and citrusy in the mouth, with tropical melon and banana flavors offset by grapefruit zest. A bit rough and acidic. Sauvignon, Chardonnay and Viognier. Vidalco International, LLC. —M.S.  
abv: 13.5% Price: \$13

**83** **Tacama 2010 Semi-Seco Blanco (Ica).** Applesauce aromas are sweet and dusty. Then in the mouth it's weighty and cloy, with candied white fruit flavors, vanilla and a sugary aftertaste. Hints of lemon and proper acidity give it some quality. Vidalco International, LLC. —M.S.  
abv: 12.5% Price: \$10

**82** **Tacama 2010 Gran Blanco (Ica).** Apple and citrus aromas struggle to hold it together. Citrusy acids control the palate, yielding grapefruit, orange and pithy flavors. Feels unruly. Sauvignon, Sémillon, Chenin Blanc and Viognier. Vidalco International, LLC. —M.S.  
abv: 13% Price: \$10

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## SPARKLING WINE

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**80** **Tacama 2010 Brut (Ica).** Best on the nose, where apple and lemony aromas are true. In the mouth, it's foamy and crude, with crushing citrus and cidery flavors. Rough, bubbly and massive; tough stuff to swallow. Vidalco International, LLC. —M.S.  
abv: 13% Price: \$15

## URUGUAY

### RED WINES

**88 Monte de Luz 2008 Carquera Cabernet Franc (San Jose).** Rusty colored and leafy on the nose, with fiery spice notes. This is interesting, dare I say it “old school” wine with core acidity and roughness to the mouthfeel and bold cherry, cola and spice flavors. Gets a bit hot at times, but it’s attractive and a well-made wine. Baron Francois Ltd. —M.S.  
**abv:** 13% **Price:** \$NA

**87 Castillo Viejo 2005 El Preciado Gran Reserva (San Jose).** Baked, sweet, heavy aromas turn earthy with time. There’s a lot of size and weight to the palate, but it stays lively and shows balance. Toast, blackberry, coffee and spice flavors lead to a dry, tannic finish. Flavorful but not what you’d call elegant. Cab Franc, Tannat, Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon. Bedford International. —M.S.  
**abv:** 12.5% **Price:** \$50

**85 Monte de Luz 2008 Carquera Tannat (San Jose).** Mint, menthol and charcoal aromas are draped over the dark bouquet. Leaden across the palate, with dried black plum, grilled meat and leathery flavors. Turns chewy and tannic on the finish. Not that well balanced but good for its deep prune character and richness. Baron Francois Ltd. —M.S.  
**abv:** 13% **Price:** \$NA

**84 Familia Deicas 2007 Don Pascual Roble Tannat (Juanico).** Earthy aromas fold in cherry and spiced plum. It’s typically hard on the palate but the smack and tannic bite are tolerable and set up deep berry, earth and chocolaty spice flavors. Like all Uruguay Tannats, it has its mouthfeel issues but offers decent overall quality. TasteVino Selections. —M.S.  
**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$20

**84 Monte de Luz 2007 Reserva Tannat - Cabernet Sauvignon (San Jose).** Earthy and plodding at first, with spiced raisin and mulled berry aromas. The palate is fairly hard, tannic and edgy, while flavors of spiced and roasted berry fruits are fresh. Tannic, drawing and always a bit sharp and hard. Baron Francois Ltd. —M.S.  
**abv:** 13% **Price:** \$NA

**83 Castillo Viejo 2007 Parcela Vieja Tannat (San Jose).** Brambly and stalky berry fruit aromas come with citrus and leafy accents. The palate is sheer and tannic, with candied, spiced, red fruit flavors. Heat and burning acidity make the finish rather rough. Bedford International. —M.S.  
**abv:** 12.5% **Price:** \$20

**83 Monte de Luz 2007 Reserva Tannat (San Jose).** Begins smoky and spicy but soon the aromas fall off to rubbery, burnt and roasted. The palate shows astringency along with cooked tomato, plum and peppery spice flavors. Tannic and tight on the finish. Baron Francois Ltd. —M.S.  
**abv:** 13% **Price:** \$NA

**82 Castillo Viejo 2007 Parcela Vieja Cabernet Franc (San Jose).** Forceful, edgy aromas of cherry and drugstore perfume precede a clippy, choppy palate with red plum and red berry flavors. Scouring and with friction on the back side, but with lots of racy red flavors. Bedford International. —M.S.  
**abv:** 12.5% **Price:** \$20

**82 Familia Deicas 2008 Don Pascual Reserve Tannat (Juanico).** Hard cherry and nail polish aromas rise up from the glass. The palate is high in acid and clumpy, with tart, leafy, rubbery berry fruit flavors. Dry and reasonably fresh on the finish. TasteVino Selections. —M.S.  
**abv:** 12.5% **Price:** \$12

**80 Castillo Viejo 2009 Catamayor Tannat (San Jose).** Mossy and earthy smelling, then rough and tight in the mouth, with rubbery unsweetened rhubarb pie flavors and finally a drawn-down finish. Bedford International. —M.S.  
**abv:** 12.5% **Price:** \$11

**80 Pueblo del Sol 2009 Tannat (Juanico).** Clumsy and a bit chemical smelling, with a sticky, thick, candied palate housing bug juice berry flavors in front of a medicinal finish. Bulky, sweet and grabby red wine. TasteVino Selections. —M.S.  
**abv:** 12.5% **Price:** \$10

## SOUTH AFRICA

### PINOTAGE

**91 Diemersfontein 2006 Reserve Pinotage (Wellington).** A beautiful Pinotage with superb expression and balance. Intriguing aromas of spicy cured meat, pepper, raw vanilla bean and mulled boysenberry abound, while the lush mouth offers concentrated dark fruit flavors of plum preserves and berry pie filling. Enjoyable now thanks to a creamy texture and silk tannins, though this wine also shows the potential to cellar for another 3–5 years. Cahoots. *Editors’ Choice.* —L.B.  
**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$25

**91 Kaapzicht 2007 Steytler Pinotage (Stellenbosch).** Named after George Steytler, who farmed the estate from 1946 to 1984, this gorgeous Pinotage is powerful yet defined. Dense black berry fruit flavors are laced with notes of sweet cedar and spice. Tight tannins provide a firm structure to the rich fruit flavors, and the endless finish offers notes of dark chocolate truffle and black pepper. Drinkable now, but could hold another 5 years. Knauth & Visser LLC. —L.B.  
**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$30

**90 Grangehurst 2003 Pinotage (Stellenbosch).** This Pinotage has the benefit of age, allowing it to be remarkably balanced and drinkable now. Bright red berry notes are laced with accents of vanilla and cured meat. The mouth is ripe and satiny, with dusty tannins and a finish loaded with sweet smoke flavors. Knauth & Visser LLC. —L.B.  
**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$20

**90 Southern Right 2009 Pinotage (Hemel en Aarde).** Prominent coffee aromas are backed by notes of black berries, sweet smoke, crushed violets and chocolate mousse. The medium-weight mouth with a texture like crushed velvet is full and rich but not overdone, with a striking balance between cherry and brambly fruit and sweet spice flavors. A long, mouthwatering finish unfolds with each sip. Vineyard Brands. —L.B.  
**abv:** 14% **Price:** \$27

**90 Spice Route 2008 Pinotage (Swartland).** This is an excellent value Pinotage, offering superb expression of the grape in a modern style at an attractive price. Rich and forward with opulent aromas of cocoa butter, raspberry sauce, freshly ground coffee and berry preserves. Dusty tannins provide a solid frame to the mouth while medium acidity keeps things lifted through the elegant finish. Vineyard Brands. —L.B.  
**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$22

**89 Diemersfontein 2009 Pinotage (Wellington).** This is Diemersfontein’s “Original Chocolate/Coffee Pinotage,” made in a very modern style to show the maximum mocha expression possible. Insanely assertive notes reminiscent of a mocha latte are supported by secondary accents of caramel, baked black berries and raspberry sauce. Round and lush, this is one for the hedonists. Cahoots. —L.B.  
**abv:** 14% **Price:** \$20

**88 Diemersdal 2010 Pinotage (Durbanville).** Though young, this Pinotage is ready to drink now. Vibrant red fruit aromas and flavors are matched with attractive accents of cocoa powder, light coffee, anise and black pepper. The mouthfeel is smooth but structured with medium acidity and fine but firmly present tannins. Try with grilled lamb chops. Knauth & Visser LLC. —L.B.  
**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$17

**88 Rijk’s 2009 Touch of Oak Pinotage (Tulbagh).** Jammy black cherry and plum aromas and flavors are jazzed up by notes of licorice, bramble and sweet spice. The structure is tight with gripping tannins and medium acidity that shows real staying power through the finish alongside a lovely sweet woody accent. The Artisan Collection. —L.B.  
**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$40

**87 La Capra Presented by Fairview 2010 Pinotage (Western Cape).** Sweet accents of vanilla bean and cedar spice up the red plum and raspberry core of this wine. Creamy and round in the mouth with soft tannins and a medium-length finish, this is a wine that’s easy to enjoy now. Vineyard Brands. *Best Buy.* —L.B.  
**abv:** 14% **Price:** \$11

**87 Rooiberg 2009 Reserve Pinotage (Robertson).** This Pinotage shows nice vibrancy and lift with the slightly high-toned red fruit aromas of currant and plum alongside secondary glimmers of sweet cured meat and earthy spice. Tight but lively with bracing acidity that results in a brisk and mouthwatering finish. Worthwhile Wine Company. —L.B.  
**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$15



**86 Stellar Organics 2011 No Added Sulfites Pinotage (Western Cape).** For full review see page 14. **Best Buy.**  
abv: 13.5% Price: \$10

**86 Tormentoso 2009 Bush Vine Pinotage (Paarl).** Hints of coffee grinds and cocoa powder mingle with the black cherry and boysenberry fruit core of this wine. The round mouth offers soft, approachable tannins followed by a solid finish. Drink now. Vineyard Brands. —L.B.  
abv: 14% Price: \$13

**85 Simonsig 2008 Pinotage (Stellenbosch).** A light and somewhat racy Pinotage with good vibrancy to the strawberry and ripe pomegranate seed notes throughout. A kiss of vanilla on the close adds a touch of decadence to this otherwise straightforward wine. Quintessential Wines. —L.B.  
abv: 14% Price: \$15

## SHIRAZ

**87 Glenelly 2009 The Glass Collection Shiraz (Stellenbosch).** Concentrated aromas of dark berries and juicy plum are laced with accents of licorice root and wild game. The round mouth shows a bit more of an herbal component with flavors of bark and forest floor, and a spicy pepper note remains on the close. Cape Classics. —L.B.  
abv: 14.5% Price: \$20

**86 Essay 2009 Shiraz (Western Cape).** Scents of ripe cherry flesh and milk chocolate unfold in the bouquet, while lean flavors of red fruit skins and spice appear on the mouth. It's a light and easy quaff, the tannins dusty and the finish short and clean. Drink now. Vineyard Brands. **Best Buy.** —L.B.  
abv: 14% Price: \$11

**85 Helderberg Wijnmakerij 2009 Shiraz (Stellenbosch).** There's a touch of heat to the nose of this Shiraz that slightly overwhelms the black plum and berry aromas. In the mouth, initial licorice and mulled boysenberry flavors transition nicely into the short but peppery close. Vineyard Brands. —L.B.  
abv: 14% Price: \$13

**84 Guardian Peak 2009 Shiraz (Western Cape).** Straightforward and easygoing with soft notes of red plum and jerky. A green streak permeates the nose and mouth, but overall it's a light and approachable wine to enjoy now. Terlato Wines International. —L.B.  
abv: 14% Price: \$15

**84 La Capra Presented by Fairview 2009 Shiraz (Coastal Region).** A short finish closes out this easy Shiraz that offers attractive but simple notes of red plum and berries. Faint nuances of licorice and black pepper can be found upon deep nosing. Vineyard Brands. —L.B.  
abv: 14% Price: \$11

## CABERNET SAUVIGNON

**86 La Capra Presented by Fairview 2010 Cabernet Sauvignon (Coastal Region).** There's a nice strak of menthol throughout this wine, lifting the traditional Cabernet notes of black plum and cherry. The mouth is silky but filling, showing excellent overall balance and a clean but lingering finish. Drink now. Vineyard Brands. **Best Buy.** —L.B.  
abv: 14% Price: \$11

**86 Riebeek Cellars 2010 Collection Cabernet Sauvignon (Swartland).** Accents of whole nutmeg and raw cinnamon bark are layered on top of vibrant yet rich cherry and berry flavors. The spice continues on to jazz up the creamy mouth, and stays well into the medium-length finish. Kysela Père et Fils. **Best Buy.** —L.B.  
abv: 14% Price: \$10

**85 Beyond 2010 Cabernet Sauvignon (Western Cape).** Although dense on the palate with concentrated black fruit flavors and a touch of mocha, there's a green streak to the nose of this Cab. The mouth is round and fleshy with a short but clean finish. Cape Classics. —L.B.  
abv: 14% Price: \$12

**84 Two Oceans 2010 Cabernet Sauvignon (Western Cape).** Brambly berry and jammy black plum mingle with notes of violet and fudge. With soft tannins and a chocolaty mouth, this is an easy drinker that's a good value. Aveniù Brands, Inc. —L.B.  
abv: 13.5% Price: \$10

**83 Stellar Organics 2010 Cabernet Sauvignon (Western Cape).** Soft black raspberry and cherry notes struggle for expression on the nose. Light and easy in the mouth, the wine is balanced but lacking a bit of heft and structure. USA Wine Imports. —L.B.  
abv: 13.5% Price: \$10

## MERLOT

**88 Guardian Peak 2010 Merlot (Western Cape).** A balanced and well-structured wine, this Merlot expresses attractive aromas of black plum, soft sweet licorice and delicate spice. The mouth is lush and round with soft tannins and a chocolaty finish. Drink now. Terlato Wines International. —L.B.  
abv: 14.5% Price: \$15

**86 Stellar Organics 2010 No Added Sulfites Merlot (Western Cape).** Floral notes of crushed violet petals add depth to the otherwise fruit-driven core of this wine. Juicy flavors of blueberry and raspberry abound in the silky mouth and light tannins linger through the close. Easy and approachable; drink now. The Triton Collection. **Best Buy.** —L.B.  
abv: 13.5% Price: \$10

**85 Indaba 2010 Merlot (Western Cape).** An interesting note of sweet smoke graces the nose of this Merlot, adding another layer to the otherwise traditional characteristics of rich black berry and dark plum guts. Round and satisfying in the mouth with ap-

proachable tannins and a medium finish. Cape Classics. **Best Buy.** —L.B.  
abv: 14% Price: \$10

**85 Two Oceans 2010 Merlot (Western Cape).** Concentrated notes of vanilla bean marry with raspberry and ripe red cherry aromas and flavors, while the finish shows a touch of a waxy red plum skin character. Clean and simple; drink now. Aveniù Brands, Inc. **Best Buy.** —L.B.  
abv: 13.5% Price: \$10

**82 Leopard's Leap 2010 Merlot (Western Cape).** Woody accents of bark and berry leaves somewhat overwhelm the dark fruit core to this wine. Lean and light with an overall green tinge. Kysela Père et Fils. —L.B.  
abv: 13.5% Price: \$14

## RHÔNE WHITES

### COSTIÈRES DE NÎMES

**90 Michel Gassier 2010 Château de Nages JT (Costières de Nîmes).** This is almost all (95%) barrel-fermented Roussanne, and yet the oak shows up only as a slightly smoky note on the nose, a bit of spice and some creaminess on the palate. Otherwise, it delivers lush melon and citrus fruit and a long, fruit-driven finish. Drink now–2015. USA Wine Imports. —J.C.  
abv: NA Price: \$25

**90 Michel Gassier 2010 Lou Coucardié (Costières de Nîmes).** This barrel-fermented and -aged blend of Roussanne, Grenache Blanc and Viognier is nicely balanced, blending oak and lees notes of spice and toasted nuts with pineapple and melon. Despite the reported alcohol level, it doesn't seem hot at all, ending harmoniously and long. Drink up over the next year or so. USA Wine Imports. —J.C.  
abv: 15% Price: \$NA

**89 Château Mas Neuf 2010 Compostelle Blanc (Costières de Nîmes).** This impressively balanced wine is 90% Roussanne and 10% Viognier, and displays a remarkable tension between fruit—peaches and oranges—and mineral, between ripeness and acidity. The only quibble is that it fades a bit quickly on the finish. Drink now and into the first half of 2012. Multiple U.S. importers. —J.C.  
abv: NA Price: \$NA

**89 Mas des Bressades 2010 Cuvée Tradition (Costières de Nîmes).** A lovely blend of several varieties, this wine delivers a whiff of sea brine, some herbes de Provence and ripe pineapple notes. It's a concentrated, medium-weight wine that manages to be a bit viscous without seeming heavy. Finishes long, balanced by peppery spice. Drink now. Robert Kacher Imports. —J.C.  
abv: NA Price: \$NA

**89 Michel Gassier 2010 Château de Nages Vieilles Vignes Blanc (Costières de Nîmes).** This blend of Grenache Blanc (50%), Roussanne (40%) and Viognier (10%) is partially barrel fer-

mented, resulting in a plump, round wine with hints of toasted oats, melon and spice. It nevertheless retains a briny edge of minerality that acts as the wine's spine and imparts length to the finish. Drink now. USA Wine Imports. —J.C.  
**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$20

**88 Michel Gassier 2010 Nostre País (Costières de Nîmes).** This well-ripened white is mainly Grenache Blanc, part of which is matured in oak for six months. The melon flavors hint at vanilla and peach, and although it's a rich, moderately oaky wine, it remains crisp on the finish. Drink through the end of 2012. European Cellars. —J.C.  
**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$NA

**87 Château Mas Neuf 2010 Rhône Paradoux Blanc (Costières de Nîmes).** A blend of 65% Grenache Blanc and 35% Roussanne, this is a fresh, lively blend, imbued with understated orange and melon fruit flavors and a slightly briny note. Drink this refreshing, medium-bodied white over the next 6–9 months. Multiple U.S. importers. —J.C.  
**abv:** NA **Price:** \$NA

**87 Château Vessière 2010 Costières de Nîmes.** This is a fresh, vibrant blend of 85% Roussanne and 15% Grenache Blanc. It's medium bodied, with straightforward pineapple flavors and a touch of almond skin. Simple but solidly made; crisp and lingering on the finish. Drink now. Kysela Père et Fils. —J.C.  
**abv:** 12.5% **Price:** \$13

**86 Chateau Mourgues du Gres 2010 Les Galets Dorés (Costières de Nîmes).** This mildly aromatic blend of Grenache Blanc, Roussanne and Vermentino marries apple and lime flavors into a fresh, citrusy white that persists nicely on the finish. Drink now. Weygandt-Metzler. —J.C.  
**abv:** NA **Price:** \$NA

**86 Mas Carlot 2010 Cuvée Tradition (Costières de Nîmes).** This wine starts off slowly, with only faint scents of oranges, but then it delivers bold, assertive flavors of those same oranges, filled out by hints of honeyed ripeness. It does turn a bit warm on the finish; drink it over the next few months. Robert Kacher Imports. —J.C.  
**abv:** NA **Price:** \$NA

**85 Château Beaubois 2010 Expression (Costières de Nîmes).** This blend of Rolle (Vermentino), Viognier and Roussanne is fresh and floral, with a lean, crisp feel that acts to rein in the citrus blossom and melon notes. Drink now. Demontoux Fine Wines. —J.C.  
**abv:** 13% **Price:** \$15

**85 Château L'Ermitage 2010 Tradition (Costières de Nîmes).** This blend of 60% Roussanne, 20% Viognier and 20% Grenache Blanc is crisp and lean, with hints of brine and struck flint accenting pineapple fruit. Tight and citrusy on the finish. Drink now for its freshness. Baron Francois Ltd. —J.C.  
**abv:** 13% **Price:** \$12

**84 Château de la Tuilerie 2009 Viognier-Grenache Blanc (Costières de Nîmes).** The 20% Viognier doesn't seem to make much of impression, as the wine lacks that variety's often flamboyant aromatics. Instead, it delivers modest lime and grapefruit flavors, medium body and a crisp, abbreviated finish. Domaine Select Wine Estates. —J.C.  
**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$18

## LUBERON

**90 Marrenon 2010 Grand Marrenon (Luberon).** This partially barrel-fermented blend of Grenache Blanc, Vermentino and Roussanne is ambitious, but hits the right notes, displaying hints of toasted almond, vanilla, pineapple and honeyed ripeness. The wood and lees impact the wine, but not to excess. USA Wine Imports. —J.C.  
**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$14

**88 Domaine de la Citadelle 2010 Le Châteaig-nier (Luberon).** This blend of Clairette, Grenache Blanc, Ugni Blanc and Vermentino is flashy and forward, offering hints of struck flint, passion fruit and melon, a slightly creamy mouthfeel and a healthy pinch of white pepper to enliven the finish. Petit Pois. —J.C.  
**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$17

**88 Marrenon 2009 Doria (Luberon).** This blend of Vermentino (45%), Grenache Blanc (40%) and Roussanne (15%) is aged in a combination of oak and stainless steel, resulting in a round, mouthfilling wine that nevertheless remains crisp and easy to drink. Hints of smoke and marshmallow serve to accent the ripe melon, pineapple and honey flavors. Drink now. USA Wine Imports. —J.C.  
**abv:** 13% **Price:** \$14

**87 Château Val Joanis 2010 Tradition Roussanne (Luberon).** This is 100% Roussanne, from one of the highest vineyards in the Luberon. It's fruity and direct, a well-made medium-bodied white, boasting a panopoly of fruit flavors ranging from pear to pineapple, and hints of melon as well. Drink it over the next several months. Wineberry America LLC. —J.C.  
**abv:** 13% **Price:** \$NA

**86 Château la Canorgue 2010 Luberon.** This blend of Roussanne, Marsanne, Clairette and Grenache Blanc shows some plumpness on the mid-palate thanks to lees contact rather than oak. Aromas are of struck flint and passion fruit, but the flavors are riper, skewing toward melon and nectarine yet remaining crisp and focused on the finish. Drink now. Beaune Imports. —J.C.  
**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$NA

**85 Domaine de la Citadelle 2010 Les Artèmes (Luberon).** Crisp, clean and fruit-driven, with apple and citrus notes. It's middle-of-the-road as far as weight. The pineapple-like flavors are simple but refreshing. A blend of Roussanne, Marsanne, Grenache Blanc and Clairette. Petit Pois. —J.C.  
**abv:** 14% **Price:** \$25

**85 Domaine de Tara 2010 Terres d'Ocres (Ventoux).** A light, easy-drinking blend of Gr-

enache Blanc (56%), Clairette (37%) and Roussanne (7%), the Terre d'Ocres displays an array of fresh stone fruit, citrus and a bit of white pepper. Drink now. Gabriella Importers Inc. —J.C.  
**abv:** 13% **Price:** \$NA

**85 La Vieille Ferme 2010 Luberon.** A modest, crisp white for immediate consumption, this is cleanly made and refreshing, with fruit-driven notes of passion fruit, pear and pineapple. The blend contains Grenache Blanc, Bourboulenc, Ugni Blanc and Roussanne. Vineyard Brands. *Best Buy.* —J.C.  
**abv:** 13% **Price:** \$9

**84 Bourgeois Family 2009 In Fine (Ventoux).** This blend of 80% Clairette and 20% Bourboulenc seems to be fading a little, losing its freshness in favor of greater palate breadth. The flavors are largely neutral, but hint at oranges. Drink up. Bourgeois Family Selections. —J.C.  
**abv:** 13% **Price:** \$12

**84 M. Chapoutier 2010 La Ciboise (Luberon).** Chapoutier's white Luberon is a lightweight, crisp offering, featuring polite apple and citrus flavors. Lacks much distinction, but clean and fresh. Terlato Wines International. —J.C.  
**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$17

## VENTOUX

**91 Château Pesquié 2009 Quintessence (Ventoux).** This blend of 80% Roussanne and 20% Clairette is rich and round, sumptuous and honeyed. It's largely barrel fermented, and carries a hint of tannin through the finish, which actually helps balance out the wine's lushness. Drink now. European Cellars. —J.C.  
**abv:** 13% **Price:** \$25

**87 Domaine de Tara 2009 Hautes Pierres (Ventoux).** Hints at toast and buttery richness on the nose, then delivers exactly that on the palate. Its mouthfilling peach and melon flavors are deliciously soft and drinkable, featuring touches of honey and truffle on the finish. Drink now. Gabriella Importers Inc. —J.C.  
**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$NA

**86 Château Valcombe 2010 Epicure (Ventoux).** This four-variety blend (Grenache Blanc, Roussanne, Clairette and Bourboulenc) starts off flinty and sharp, then develops greater breadth on the palate. The ripe melon flavors finish with an edge of passion fruit. Drink now. Rosenthal Wine Merchants. —J.C.  
**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$NA

**86 Domaine des Anges 2010 Côtes-du-Ventoux.** Stoic and reserved on the nose, this blend of Roussanne, Grenache Blanc, Bourboulenc and Clairette expands on the palate, delivering ample weight and richness. Melon and anise notes emerge on the finish. Drink now. Encore Wine Imports. —J.C.  
**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$NA

**84 Domaine des Anges 2010 Archange (Côtes-du-Ventoux).** This 100% Roussanne,

barrel-fermented cuvée is rather subdued right now, with modest melon and peach notes, medium body and a touch of anise on the finish. Give it a few months to blossom in the bottle, then drink up by the end of 2012. Encore Wine Imports. —J.C.  
abv: 13.5% Price: \$NA

## RHÔNE ROSÉS

### COSTIÈRES DE NÎMES

**91 Mas des Bressades 2010 Cuvée Tradition Rosé (Costières de Nîmes).** Flinty at first, then becoming more perfumed, with hints of herbs and berries. This lovely rosé is round and ample in the mouth, delivering a blend of fruit, herb and mineral flavors. Nicely balanced spice notes mark the finish. Drink now. Robert Kacher Imports. —J.C.  
abv: NA Price: \$NA

**90 Chateau Mourgues du Gres 2010 Les Gallets Rosés (Costières de Nîmes).** This enchanting rosé starts off slightly flinty and citrusy on the nose, but follows up on the palate with waves of creamy concentration and ripe berry fruit balanced by a bright, refreshing finish. Weygandt-Metzler. —J.C.  
abv: NA Price: \$NA

**89 Château Beaubois 2010 Expression Rosé (Costières de Nîmes).** This is a crisp, Syrah-based rosé, with some passion fruit on the nose, but then ripe berry flavors on the palate. It's plump and medium-bodied, yet finishes with a zing of refreshing acidity. Drink now. Demontoux Fine Wines. —J.C.  
abv: 13% Price: \$15

**89 Château L'Ermitage 2010 Tradition Rosé (Costières de Nîmes).** Like so many of the Costières de Nîmes rosés, this is a medium-bodied, rounded wine, loaded with cherries and almost tropical fruit. It's very easy to drink, with a richness akin to white chocolate on the finish. Drink now. Baron Francois Ltd. **Best Buy.** —J.C.  
abv: 13% Price: \$12

**88 Dauvergne & Ranvier 2010 Vin Gourmand Rosé (Costières de Nîmes).** This is a medium-bodied, fresh and fruit-driven example of rosé. The berry, peach and lime flavors make for uncomplicated fun and refreshment. Drink this blend of Grenache and Cinsault over the next few months. The Sorting Table. —J.C.  
abv: 13% Price: \$NA

**85 Château Mas Neuf 2010 Compostelle Rosé (Costières de Nîmes).** Rather neutral aromatically, somewhat surprising for a blend of 55% Cinsaut, 20% Grenache, 20% Mourvèdre and 5% white grapes. This is very citrusy on the palate yet richly textured, with some lime-like greenish notes. Drink now. Multiple U.S. importers. —J.C.  
abv: NA Price: \$NA

**84 Château d'Or et de Gueules 2010 Les Cimels Rosé (Costières de Nîmes).** This four-variety blend (Cinsaut, Mourvèdre, Grenache and Syrah) features strawberries and struck flint on the

nose, then appears very crisp and lean on the palate. No doubt it's meant to be mineral, but it comes across as lacking a bit of fruit, although it is zesty and refreshing. Robert Kacher Imports. —J.C.  
abv: 12.5% Price: \$NA

**84 Château Mas Neuf 2010 Rhône Paradox Rosé (Costières de Nîmes).** This medium-bodied blend of Cinsaut, Mourvèdre, Syrah and Grenache features bright raspberry and lime notes alongside a touch of apple. Very crisp; on the lean side for a Costières de Nîmes rosé. Multiple U.S. importers. —J.C.  
abv: NA Price: \$NA

**84 Château Vessière 2010 Rosé (Costières de Nîmes).** On the light side of the color spectrum, and not very weighty either, with flinty aromas and crisp flavors of melon rind, cranberry and citrus. Lean and refreshing. Kysela Père et Fils. —J.C.  
abv: 12.5% Price: \$13

**84 Louis Bernard 2010 Rosé (Costières de Nîmes).** A broad, rather soft example of rosé, this blend of Grenache, Syrah and Carignan should be consumed over the next few months. Boisset Family Estates. —J.C.  
abv: 12.5% Price: \$13

### LUBERON

**87 Château la Canorgue 2010 Rosé (Luberon).** Fits the fashion for very pale rosé, with delicate pink color and aromas of struck flint and passion fruit. In the mouth, it's mouthwatering and plump, with peachy notes and a bit of lime zest to finish. Drink now. Beaune Imports. —J.C.  
abv: 12.5% Price: \$NA

**86 Domaine de la Citadelle 2010 Le Châtaignier Rosé (Luberon).** A very pale rosé, matching the latest European trend, and drinking very much like a white wine, with flinty, passion fruit aromas and showing just the merest hint of strawberry on the palate. Turns chalky on the finish. Petit Pois. —J.C.  
abv: 13.5% Price: \$16

**86 Marrenon 2010 Grand Toque Rosé (Luberon).** Pale salmon rosé, with peach and melon aromas. It's dry and mineral on the palate, with mouthwatering acids that linger on the finish. USA Wine Imports. —J.C.  
abv: 13% Price: \$10

**84 Château Val Joanis 2010 Tradition Syrah Rosé (Luberon).** This light- to medium-bodied rosé of Syrah is dramatically fruity, with waves of bubble-gum-like aromas and simple flavors of ripe cherries. Finishes crisp and tart, making it reasonably refreshing. Wineberry America LLC. —J.C.  
abv: 12.5% Price: \$NA

### VENTOUX

**87 Château Pesquié 2010 Terrasses Rosé (Ventoux).** A bubbly, exuberant-smelling rosé, medium flamingo-pink in hue, with plenty of weight on

the palate. It's a bit broad, but the peach and strawberry flavors are successfully enlivened by a peppery finish. European Cellars. —J.C.  
abv: 13% Price: \$14

**86 Domaine de la Pigeade 2010 Rosé (Ventoux).** This direct-press rosé is correspondingly very pale in color, with delicate aromas of peach and melon. On the palate, it's medium weight, with a slightly creamy texture and hints of spice and citrus on the finish. Drink now. —J.C.  
abv: 13% Price: \$NA

**86 Vignobles La Coterie 2010 Passe Colline Rosé (Ventoux).** This rosé is vibrant flamingo-pink in color, with subtle aromas of cherries and white chocolate. In the mouth, it's medium bodied, becoming steadily more intense until it finishes with a burst of citrusy fruit and a hint of silky tannin. Cordon Selections. —J.C.  
abv: 13.2% Price: \$NA

**85 La Vieille Ferme 2010 Rosé (Ventoux).** Vibrantly colored, with a pronounced cherry-berry aroma that verges on confectionary. Ditto the flavors, although the wine is dry and medium bodied, with a crisp finish. Drink now. Vineyard Brands. —J.C.  
abv: 13.5% Price: \$9

**84 Vignobles La Coterie 2010 Pomelo Rosé (Ventoux).** This pale pink rosé is fresh, direct and clean, hinting at strawberries and limes, with a burst of acidity on the finish. Cordon Selections. —J.C.  
abv: 13.5% Price: \$NA

### OTHER ROSÉS

**90 E. Guigal 2010 Rosé (Tavel).** This shows greater complexity than most rosés, with hints of leather and spice layered over cherry fruit. It's round in the mouth and rich in weight without being heavy or warm. The spice-driven finish lingers a long time. Drink now and over the next year. Vintus LLC. —J.C.  
abv: 13.5% Price: \$25

**88 E. Guigal 2010 Rosé (Côtes du Rhône).** The price of this entry-level cuvée has crept up over the years, but it remains a very good wine at a realistic price point. Crushed stone on the nose leads into dusty cherry flavors with hints of garrigue. Medium-bodied yet refreshing on the finish. Drink now and over the next 6–9 months. Vintus LLC. —J.C.  
abv: 13.5% Price: \$18

**86 Ogier 2010 Heritages Rosé (Côtes du Rhône).** Four different grape varieties go into this well-made rosé, but the result is still somewhat straightforward, largely plums and cherries. It's medium in body, yet does show a trace of warmth on the finish. Vinum International. —J.C.  
abv: 13.5% Price: \$12

**82 Les Vins de Vienne NV Reméage Rosé of Syrah (Vin de France).** Starts off rough, featuring wet dog and rubber aromas, before settling down to deliver some watermelon-like fruit. Although



not usual for rosés, try decanting. Domaine Select Wine Estates. —J.C.

abv: 14%

Price: \$15

## RHÔNE REDS

### COSTIÈRES DE NÎMES

**91** **Château d'Or et de Gueules 2009 Trassegum (Costières de Nîmes)**. This standout from the Costières has all the ingredients to age. It starts off with gorgeous aromas of garrigue, baking spices and black cherries, then delivers a rich mouthful of drying tannins. And at the end, the fruit comes through on the lengthy finish. Try this blend of 50% Syrah, 30% Mourvèdre and 20% Carignan from 2014 on. Robert Kacher Imports. *Cellar Selection*. —J.C.

abv: 14%

Price: \$NA

**91** **Chateau Mourgues du Gres 2009 Capitelles (Costières de Nîmes)**. Drawn from a particularly good parcel of old-vine Syrah and bolstered by just 10% Grenache and Carignan, this is an exciting expression of Costières de Nîmes. Aged in 500-liter barrels, the wood component is subtle, adding hints of cedar, vanilla and great textural richness to the wine. Plum, licorice and tree bark notes finish long and velvety. Drink now–2020. Weygandt-Metzler. —J.C.

abv: NA

Price: \$NA

**91** **Michel Gassier 2009 Château de Nages JT (Costières de Nîmes)**. This blend of Syrah and Mourvèdre features lovely oak, balanced by black cherries. It's powerful and intense, with plenty of fruit to back up the oak, but it needs a little time to fully come together. Drink 2013–2020. USA Wine Imports. —J.C.

abv: 14.5%

Price: \$NA

**91** **Michel Gassier 2009 Lou Coucardié (Costières de Nîmes)**. The blend of old-vine Mourvèdre, Grenache and Syrah features slightly lifted aromas of oak spice, vanilla and dark fruit. The mid-palate is creamy and lush, full of dark cherries and chocolate, whose flavors linger enticingly on the finish. Drink now–2016. USA Wine Imports. —J.C.

abv: 15%

Price: \$NA

**90** **Château Beaubois 2009 Harmonie (Costières de Nîmes)**. Château Beaubois's top cuvée, this blend of 70% Syrah and 30% Grenache is aged in 450-liter casks for 14 months prior to bottling, yet it doesn't seem oaky at all. Instead, it's herbal, jammy and savory all at once, with lovely spice notes and substantial tannins on the finish. Drink 2013–2020. Demontoux Fine Wines. *Cellar Selection*. —J.C.

abv: 14%

Price: \$25

**90** **Mas des Bressades 2009 Cuvée Excellence (Costières de Nîmes)**. This Syrah-based cuvée is aged in barrel, but the cedary notes are only a backdrop to the floral, garrigue notes and dark fruit aromas. In the mouth, the flavors seem brighter and more like red berries, with plenty of savory spice for interest. It's drinking well now, but the moderate

tannins suggest it should hold through 2016. Robert Kacher Imports. —J.C.

abv: NA

Price: \$NA

**90** **Mas des Bressades 2009 Quintessence (Costières de Nîmes)**. Featuring a combination of cedar, garrigue and bouncy red fruit, this wine achieves lovely balance and complexity. It's medium bodied, with raspberry and cherry fruit accented by hints of spice and vanilla. Should easily last through 2016. Robert Kacher Imports. —J.C.

abv: NA

Price: \$NA

**90** **Michel Gassier 2010 Nages Réserve Rouge (Costières de Nîmes)**. An excellent value, Gassier's 2010 Réserve from his Château de Nages blends 60% Grenache with 40% Syrah. The result is a wine that combines leathery, cedary notes with touches of spice and red fruit. It's supple, creamy and inviting, with a long, softly tannic finish. Drink now and for 3–4 years. USA Wine Imports. *Best Buy*. —J.C.

abv: NA

Price: \$14

**90** **Michel Gassier 2009 Les Piliers Syrah (Costières de Nîmes)**. Although this cuvée is 100% Syrah, it's remarkably well behaved, without any reductive or animale scents. Instead, it delivers ripe cherry and vanilla aromas, some creaminess on the palate and a long, elegant finish that ends savory not sweet. Drink now–2016. USA Wine Imports. —J.C.

abv: 14%

Price: \$20

**89** **Château Beaubois 2009 Confiance (Costières de Nîmes)**. Unlike most Costières de Nîmes, this is 95% Grenache, giving it a round, expansive mouthfeel and soft tannins. Warm baking spices complement black cherry fruit. Drink now–2015. Demontoux Fine Wines. —J.C.

abv: 14.5%

Price: \$18

**89** **Château L'Ermitage 2009 Tradition (Costières de Nîmes)**. Spice and leather notes accent bold blueberry-blackberry fruit in this intense blend of 50% Grenache, 30% Mourvèdre and 20% Syrah. The tannins are still firm, so give them another 6–9 months to soften, then drink the wine over the next couple of years. Baron Francois Ltd. *Best Buy*. —J.C.

abv: 13%

Price: \$12

**89** **Chateau Mourgues du Gres 2009 Terre d'Argence (Costières de Nîmes)**. A blend of 90% Syrah and 10% Grenache from old vines, this is an elegant, medium-bodied example of Costières de Nîmes, with nothing out of place. Plummy fruit is accented by hints of spice and framed by soft tannins, with a long, crisp finish. Drink now–2016. Weygandt-Metzler. —J.C.

abv: NA

Price: \$NA

**89** **Mas Carlot 2009 Cuvée Tradition (Costières de Nîmes)**. Pungent, a bit like smoked black olives, but with a bright beam of blackberry fruit. This is medium to full bodied in the mouth, a little creamy in texture without being overly lush, with

a jammy, fruit-filled finish. Drink now–2015. Robert Kacher Imports. —J.C.

abv: NA

Price: \$NA

**88** **Château Beaubois 2009 Expression (Costières de Nîmes)**. Meaty and savory in style, with Syrah clearly playing a big part in the blend (70%; the other 30% is Grenache). This wine delivers authentic Southern Rhône Syrah flavors of asphalt, tapenade and espresso, devoid of any overt wood, remaining firm on the finish. Drink now–2014. Demontoux Fine Wines. —J.C.

abv: 13.5%

Price: \$15

**88** **Château d'Or et de Gueules 2009 Qu'es Aquo (Costières de Nîmes)**. This pure Carignan from 80-year-old vines is really interesting aromatically, featuring hints of clove, cinnamon and lavender, but its substantial tannins clamp down hard on the palate, raising the question of whether it has enough fruit concentration to age successfully. Drink now with tannin-taming rare beef or lamb, or cellar it and hope. Robert Kacher Imports. —J.C.

abv: 13%

Price: \$NA

**88** **Mas Carlot 2009 Les Enfants Terribles (Costières de Nîmes)**. A blend of 50% Mourvèdre and 50% Syrah, this is a dark, earthy wine, featuring hints of black olive and espresso. Yet it's very lush and supple in the mouth, very forward and inviting, yet balanced by crisp acids on the finish. Drink now–2015. Robert Kacher Imports. —J.C.

abv: NA

Price: \$NA

**88** **Michel Gassier 2009 Château de Nages Vieilles Vignes Rouge (Costières de Nîmes)**. Flashy upfront, with hints of garrigue spicing up cedar, vanilla and jammy black cherries and blackberries. This is ripe and round, and maybe even a bit much in terms of fruity concentration. Drink this hedonistic blend of Grenache (60%), Syrah (30%) and Mourvèdre (10%) over the next several years. USA Wine Imports. —J.C.

abv: 15%

Price: \$20

**87** **Château d'Or et de Gueules 2009 Les Cimels (Costières de Nîmes)**. Promising notes of dried flowers and herbs give way to fresh blackberry fruit. This is very clean and crisp on the palate, marked by tough tannins on the finish. Give this blend of Syrah, Carignan and Grenache a year or two in the cellar to soften. Robert Kacher Imports. —J.C.

abv: 14%

Price: \$NA

**87** **Château Mas Neuf 2009 Rhône Paradox Rouge (Costières de Nîmes)**. Subtle cinnamon and clove notes are layered over dark fruit in this easy-drinking red. It's plummy and spicy on the palate, even showing some peppery nuances and soft, well-ripened tannins, yet still gives an impression of rusticity. Drink now–2015. Multiple U.S. importers. —J.C.

abv: NA

Price: \$NA

**87** **Domaine Bahourat 2009 Cuvée Elisabeth (Costières de Nîmes)**. A dark-toned, rather full-bodied expression of Costières, with notes of tapenade, coffee and tar taking the lead over baked

plums. The blend is Syrah-heavy, at 80%, with the balance made up of Grenache. Drink now–2015. Bourgeois Family Selections. **Best Buy**. —J.C.  
abv: 14% Price: \$11

**86** **Château Beaubois 2009 Elegance (Costières de Nîmes)**. Although this is aimed at a slightly higher target than Beaubois's entry-level Expression cuvée, it comes across as just slightly more tannic, with a fine balance of blackberries, olives and earth on the midpalate but a touch of coarseness to the finish. 80% Syrah, 20% Grenache. Drink 2012–2015. Demontoux Fine Wines. —J.C.  
abv: 13.5% Price: \$16

**86** **Gabriel Meffre 2009 Château Grand Escalion (Costières de Nîmes)**. From its pungent aromas of asphalt and black olive to its firm, drying tannins, this is a sturdy if somewhat tough and unyielding example of Costières de Nîmes red. Gabriel Meffre America. —J.C.  
abv: 13.8% Price: \$NA

**85** **Domaine Fincham 2007 Red Note Grenache-Syrah (Costières de Nîmes)**. This mature example of Costières de Nîmes should be consumed over the next six months or so for its appealing savory characters of leather and dried fruit. It's medium bodied, with a silky finish that should make it easy to pair with anything from chicken to lamb. Hand Picked Selections. —J.C.  
abv: 14% Price: \$18

**85** **Michel Gassier 2009 Notre Païs (Costières de Nîmes)**. Different in style from many Costières de Nîmes, this is exceptionally spicy, with clove and cinnamon notes that play a dominant role in the wine's flavor profile, gently rolling over the brown sugar and sour plum elements. The blend is Carignan, Mourvèdre, Cinsault, Grenache and Syrah. Drink now–2015. USA Wine Imports. —J.C.  
abv: 14.5% Price: \$18

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## LUBERON

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**91** **Guillaume Gros 2007 Côté Terroir (Luberon)**. Expertly combines fruity and savory, resulting in a complex and intriguing wine. Leather, coffee and meat notes balance raspberry, plum and spice in this medium-bodied red that should drink well through 2015. It's long, silky and mouthwatering on the finish. Sherbrooke Cellars. **Editors' Choice**. —J.C.  
abv: 15% Price: \$35

**90** **Château la Canorgue 2009 Luberon**. From organically farmed vineyards and 50-year-old vines, this is a velvety-textured blend of Syrah, Grenache and Carignan aged in *foudres* and *demi-muids*. Combine blackberry fruit, peppery spice and a soft, lingering finish and the result is a winner. Drink now–2015. Beume Imports. —J.C.  
abv: 14% Price: \$NA

**90** **Domaine de Fontenille 2009 Luberon**. This blend of 70% Grenache and 30% Syrah displays a complex array of aromas and flavors, ranging from black cherry to black olive and from clove to lico-

rice. It's richly structured, yet juicy, with a velvety feel. Drink now–2018. Weygandt-Metzler. —J.C.  
abv: 14% Price: \$NA

**89** **Marrenon 2009 Grand Marrenon (Luberon)**. Big, yet creamy in texture and refined, with plenty of silky tannins to frame the superripe black cherry fruit. Just lacks a little complexity, but still a very good, juicy mouthful of fruit and oak. Drink now–2013. USA Wine Imports. —J.C.  
abv: 14.5% Price: \$14

**88** **Château Val Joanis 2008 Tradition Syrah (Luberon)**. A very drinkable Syrah that showcases the variety's peppery, herbal, red-fruited side. It's light to medium in body, with silky tannins and a crisp, mouthwatering finish. Wineberry America LLC. —J.C.  
abv: 14% Price: \$NA

**88** **Domaine de la Citadelle 2009 Gouverneur St-Auban (Luberon)**. An attractive, Syrah-based blend, Citadelle's 2009 Gouverneur St-Auban leans toward the red berry side of the aroma-flavor spectrum, tinged with cracked pepper. It's creamy on the palate, yet despite that never seems overly rich or weighty. Drink now–2014. Petit Pois. —J.C.  
abv: 14.5% Price: \$39

**87** **Guillaume Gros 2007 Pourquoi Pas (Côtes du Luberon)**. This may lack the silky completeness of Gros's 2007 Côté Terroir, but this open-knit blend of 50% Grenache, 25% Carignan and 25% Syrah still delivers a bold mouthful of plum and roasted meat flavors. Drink now. Massanois Imports. —J.C.  
abv: 14.5% Price: \$25

**86** **Marrenon 2009 Private Gallery Syrah-Grenache (Luberon)**. With no oak (this blend of 80% Syrah and 20% Grenache is aged exclusively in stainless steel), this is a bright, fruit-forward example of Luberon rouge, medium bodied, with cherry fruit and subtle leather and spice nuances. Drink it over the next year or two. U.S. Wine Import. —J.C.  
abv: 14% Price: \$12

**83** **M. Chapoutier 2009 La Ciboise (Luberon)**. Starts off with slightly confectionary cherry fruit, accented by peppery spice aromas and flavors. The structure is extremely soft, definitely making it a drink-now sort of wine. Terlato Wines International. —J.C.  
abv: 14.5% Price: \$17

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## VENTOUX

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**92** **Vindemio 2009 Amadeus (Ventoux)**. Mainly Grenache (80%, the balance is Syrah) aged entirely in tank, this wine features loads of super-ripe dark cherries and plums, yet with a savory, olive- and meat-tinged aspect as well. Full-bodied, with a velvety texture and a long finish, it should drink well through at least 2016. European Cellars. —J.C.  
abv: 15% Price: \$30

**91** **Domaine de la Crillonne 2009 Le Gobellet (Ventoux)**. Perhaps it's because of the stem

inclusion, but this wine is amazingly floral and spicy on the nose. On the palate, it's just a little creamy in texture, with savory elements that balance raspberry underpinnings. Tannins are supple, making it deceptively easy to drink now, although it should age well through at least 2016. The blend is 35% Mourvèdre, 35% Grenache and 30% Syrah. Cavatappi. —J.C.  
abv: 14.1% Price: \$NA

**90** **Cascavel 2009 Le Cascavel (Côtes-du-Ventoux)**. For full review see page 8. **Editors' Choice**.  
abv: 14.5% Price: \$16

**90** **Château Pesquié 2009 Quintessence (Ventoux)**. Pesquié's red Quintessence is a blend of 80% Syrah and 20% Grenache, aged in oak barrels. The result features plenty of spices, like clove, nutmeg and cinnamon, but also lush cassis and raspberry fruit and a velvety texture. Drink now–2016. European Cellars. —J.C.  
abv: 14.5% Price: \$25

**90** **Domaine de la Crillonne 2009 Vieilles Vignes (Ventoux)**. Old-vine Grenache (80%, the balance is Syrah) aged in old oak casks has resulted in a wine textured like heavy cream or velvet, with the merest hints of vanilla and cedar to the cherry fruit. Lingers elegantly on the finish. Cavatappi. —J.C.  
abv: 14.9% Price: \$NA

**90** **Domaine du Tix 2009 Bramefan (Ventoux)**. This Syrah-heavy cuvée (92%) features hints of toast, woodspice and vanilla layered over lush cherry fruit. A bit modern in style perhaps, but nicely balanced and ready to drink. Bond Street Wines. —J.C.  
abv: 14% Price: \$NA

**90** **Domaine du Tix 2009 Doña Maria (Ventoux)**. This Grenache-dominated cuvée starts off with beautiful lifted aromas of clove, allspice and cherries. On the palate, it's rich, full-bodied and savory, with plentiful tannins that balance out the ripe cherry fruit. Ambitious, and pulls it off. Drink 2012–2016. Bond Street Wines. —J.C.  
abv: 14.5% Price: \$NA

**90** **Martinelle 2009 Ventoux**. This is a lovely example of Ventoux Grenache (80%), with 15% Syrah and 5% a blend of Mourvèdre, Cinsaut and Carignan. It's slightly warm in style and supple in structure, but with hints of dried flowers and licorice to give verve and dimension to the black cherry fruit. Drink now and over the next few years. Dionysos Imports Inc. —J.C.  
abv: 14.5% Price: \$18

**89** **Delas Frères 2009 Côtes-du-Ventoux**. Aged exclusively in stainless steel tanks prior to bottling, this blend of 80% Grenache and 20% Syrah is a chunky, medium-bodied red ideal for drinking over the next few years. Subtle plum and black cherry notes pick up hints of leather, earth and spice, with an ample dusting of tannin on the finish. Maisons Marques & Domaines USA. **Best Buy**. —J.C.  
abv: 14.1% Price: \$11

**89** **Domaine Terres de Solence 2009 Les 3 Pères (Ventoux)**. This blend of Grenache,

## **BUYING**guide

Carignan and Syrah shows plenty of garrigue character, mixing floral and herbal notes with plummy fruit. It's medium-bodied and boasts silky tannins on the finish. Drink now–2015. Southern Provençian LLC. —J.C.  
**abv:** 13% **Price:** \$NA

**89 Mas du Fadan 2007 Les Fées (Côtes-du-Ventoux).** A lovely example of mature Ventoux, revealing the sunny nature of the 2007 vintage in its velvety tannins and hints of chocolate and warmth. Raspberry and plum fruit carry a faintly peppery-herbal edge. Drink now–2016. Sherbrooke Cellars. —J.C.  
**abv:** 15% **Price:** \$17

**88 Bourgeois Family 2009 In Fine (Ventoux).** For full review see page 13. **Best Buy.**  
**abv:** 14% **Price:** \$12

**88 Château Pesqué 2009 Terrasses (Ventoux).** Pesqué's entry-level red is a blend of 70% Grenache and 30% Syrah, aged in a combination of tank and used oak. The result boasts dark fruit notes of blackberry and plum, but also hints of savory leather and spice. It's medium bodied, with a firmness to the finish that suggests it should hold nicely for 3–4 years. European Cellars. —J.C.  
**abv:** 14% **Price:** \$13

**88 Château Valcombe 2009 Epicure (Ventoux).** Lush in texture, despite having aged solely in concrete vats prior to bottling. The rich texture and supple tannins support warm, brandied cherry notes. Drink this engaging blend of 60% Grenache, 25% Carignan and 15% Syrah now and over the next couple of years. Rosenthal Wine Merchants. —J.C.  
**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$NA

**88 Clos de Trias 2008 Ventoux.** Still fresh, yet developing subtle nuances of age, this wine is ready to drink. Cedar and clove notes accent cherry fruit in this medium-bodied, silky-textured blend of Grenache (75%), Syrah (20%), Carignan and Cinsault. Dionysus Imports Inc. —J.C.  
**abv:** 14% **Price:** \$NA

**88 Domaine Brusset 2009 Les Boudalles (Ventoux).** A fruit-driven style, with cherry and raspberry notes accented by hints of chocolate and coffee. It's ripe and creamy on the midpalate, just fading a little too quickly on the finish. Drink now–2013. Vinum Wine Importing and Distributing LLC. —J.C.  
**abv:** 13% **Price:** \$NA

**88 Le Grand Vallat 2007 Gaïa (Ventoux).** Gaïa is this small domaine's luxury cuvée of 80% Grenache and 20% Syrah, matured in a combination of tank and wood. It's a creamy-textured, medium-bodied wine that remains slightly tannic without being hard while featuring notes of dried cherries and blueberries. Drink now–2015. Roche-Mère Wine Selections. —J.C.  
**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$22

**88 Mas Oncle Ernest 2008 Instant Présent (Ventoux).** With its distinctively briary, herbal edge, this wine stands out in a crowd. Ample cracked pepper spices up chocolate and plum flavors in this

medium-bodied 60–40 blend of Grenache and Syrah. Drink now–2016. Wines of France. —J.C.  
**abv:** 13% **Price:** \$15

**87 Alain Jaume et Fils 2010 Les Gélinothtes (Ventoux).** Bright and bouncy—almost Beaujolais-like—this is a cheerful, fruit-driven quaffer redolent of black cherries and plums. Drink it over the next year or two. Kysela Père et Fils. —J.C.  
**abv:** 14% **Price:** \$15

**87 Domaine de Fenouillet 2009 Oversant (Ventoux).** Fenouillet is better for its Beaumes de Venise, but this is a silky, supple charmer, a blend of 60% Grenache, 35% Syrah and 5% Carignan that's round yet tender in the mouth, delivering ample cherry fruit. Drink now–2014. Rosenthal Wine Merchants. —J.C.  
**abv:** 14% **Price:** \$NA

**87 Domaine des Anges 2009 Séraphin (Ventoux).** Rich and powerful, with firm tannins, this chunky, muscular red would pair well with burgers or steaks off the grill. Hints of herb and leather accent the ripe cherry fruit. Drink now–2016. Encore Wine Imports. —J.C.  
**abv:** NA **Price:** \$NA

**87 Le Grand Vallat 2009 Le Domaine (Ventoux).** Shows a bit of struck match character on the nose, but nothing that a quick splash decanting won't solve. Once past that, this 50–50 blend of Grenache and Syrah displays a lively mix of herbs and cherries, supple tannins and a long, easygoing finish. Roche-Mère Wine Selections. —J.C.  
**abv:** 14% **Price:** \$17

**87 Marrenon 2008 Orca (Ventoux).** Marrenon's luxury cuvée aged in oak is 90% Grenache and 10% Syrah and is full-bodied without being tough or overly muscular. Cherry preserves are wrapped in a coat of coffee- and chocolate-tinged oak. Drink now and over the next couple of years. USA Wine Imports. —J.C.  
**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$19

**87 Mas du Fadan 2010 Rouge (Ventoux).** From organically grown vineyards, this is a medium-bodied blend of Grenache, Carignan and Syrah, with crisply defined fruit notes of black cherries and hints of coffee, sage and baking spices. Drink it over the next 9–12 months. Sherbrooke Cellars. —J.C.  
**abv:** 12.5% **Price:** \$15

**86 Domaine Juliette Avril 2009 Ventoux.** This blend of Grenache and Syrah from Châteauneuf-based Juliette Avril is refreshingly light in body and tannin. The herb and cherry aromas and flavors go down easy and finish crisp. Jerome Selection. —J.C.  
**abv:** 13% **Price:** \$NA

**86 Vindemio 2009 Regain (Ventoux).** Proprietor Jean Marot's entry-level blend of 70% Grenache and 30% Syrah is aged entirely in cement and stainless steel, resulting in a fruit-driven, medium-bodied red that delivers cherry fruit, supple tannins and

a slightly peppery finish. Drink now–2014. European Cellars. —J.C.  
**abv:** 15% **Price:** \$16

**85 Domaine de Tara 2009 Hautes Pierres (Ventoux).** Powerfully built, with masses of cherry fruit backed by firm tannins. A bit unusual for the region, with 80% Syrah and only 20% Grenache, but it works, yielding a tough, dense wine that should age well for 5–6 years. Gabriella Importers Inc. —J.C.  
**abv:** 14% **Price:** \$NA

**85 La Vieille Ferme 2010 Ventoux.** Don't turn up your nose at this value-priced offering from La Vieille Ferme; it's a very drinkable wine, with perfumed aromas of cherries, white pepper and clove married to modest tannins. With more than 150,000 cases produced, it's as close to ubiquitous as you can get from Ventoux, and a worthy ambassador for the region. Vineyard Brands. —J.C.  
**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$9

**85 Vignobles La Coterie 2010 Passe Colline (Ventoux).** This is a soft, gentle wine, made for immediate consumption. It features bright cherry and pear-drop aromas and pleasant, if somewhat simple, fruit flavors. Two-thirds Grenache, with the rest being a blend of Syrah, Carignan, Cinsault and Mourvèdre. Cordon Selections. —J.C.  
**abv:** 13.3% **Price:** \$NA

**85 Vignobles La Coterie 2010 Pierre du Diable (Ventoux).** Less bright and perfumed than La Coterie's Passe Colline bottling, this is still a soft, approachable wine with ample cherry fruit. Hints of leather and white pepper give it a bit of complexity. The blend is 65% Grenache, 25% Syrah and 10% Carignan. Cordon Selections. —J.C.  
**abv:** 13.9% **Price:** \$NA

**84 Paul Jaboulet Aîné 2008 Les Traverses (Ventoux).** A relatively light-bodied blend of 80% Grenache and 20% Syrah, the 2008 Les Traverses displays a touch of gaminess alongside notes of plum and earth that fade quickly on the finish. Drink up. Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd. —J.C.  
**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$13

**84 Vignobles La Coterie 2010 Ventoux.** Reasonably priced, this medium-bodied blend of 60% Grenache, 30% Syrah and 10% Carignan offers a combination of dark plums and cured meats, finishing tart and dusty. Give it another few months to settle down, then drink through 2012. Cordon Selections. —J.C.  
**abv:** 14% **Price:** \$10

## BEAUJOLAIS

### BROUILLY

**90 Château de la Terrière 2009 Cuvée Jules de Souzy Vieilles Vignes (Brouilly).** Bottled unfiltered, this is a richly ripe wine, layered with a more smoky, even mineral, texture from the volcanic soil of the vineyard. It is dense, the tannins giving hints



of wood as well as a black plum skin character. Citadel Trading. —R.V.

abv: 13%

Price: \$24

**87 Château de la Terrière 2008 Cuvée Jules de Souzy Vieilles Vignes (Brouilly).** A wine that is dominated by dark, smoky tannins and acidity. It has a light fruit character but feels dry, with the wood aging given an important position. Citadel Trading. —R.V.

abv: 12.5%

Price: \$24

**87 Chateau de Pizay 2010 Château de Saint-Lager (Brouilly).** Dominated by red fruits, this wine also has the structure of 2010. It is firm and concentrated while always fruity and accessible. It could be kept for a few months, but really is ready to drink now. David Milligan Selections. —R.V.

abv: 13%

Price: \$15

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## JULIÉNAS

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**90 Domaine le Cotoyon 2009 Les Mouilles (Julié纳斯).** Very ripe, as befits 2009, this is still a young wine. It is packed with fruit, some hints of wood, delicious fresh red berries and acidity that balances the firmly tannic core. Keep the wine a year at least for the full richness to develop. Fruit of the Vines, Inc. —R.V.

abv: 13%

Price: \$NA

**90 Gaël Martin 2009 Les Fouillouses (Julié纳斯).** A structured wine, with some tight black cherry flavors as well as firm tannins. The wine has a mineral edge, the acidity giving a juicy character to the fruit, while the texture is dry, tannic. Age for a year. Fruit of the Vines, Inc. —R.V.

abv: 13%

Price: \$NA

**89 Ferraud et Fils 2010 Les Ravinets (Julié纳斯).** Tight, structured wine, with intense acidity as well as red berry fruits. It feels lean and sinewy, needing a few more months to settle and round out. Keep a year. Vinum Wine Importing and Distributing LLC. —R.V.

abv: 13%

Price: \$NA

**88 Domaine le Cotoyon 2010 Julié纳斯.** Rich, fruity wine, with great red fruits, black cherries and a structure that melds easily into the ripe character. Tannins and a plum skin texture suggest another year's aging. Fruit of the Vines, Inc. —R.V.

abv: 13%

Price: \$NA

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## MORGON

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**92 Paul Beudet 2009 Côte de Py (Morgon).** Big, ripe and opulent, its ripe tannins balanced by perfumed red fruits. There is a solid core of dark and smoky dryness, a center that promises good aging. Already, though, the wine is showing its concentration and richness. World Wide Cellars. *Cellar Selection.* —R.V.

abv: 13%

Price: \$22

**91 Ferraud et Fils 2010 Les Charmes (Morgon).** Like many Beaujolais in 2010, this wine has a firm and tannic structure. Being Morgon, though,

it also has power and richness, the black fruits intense, with acidity to balance. This could well age for 2–3 years and more. Vinum Wine Importing and Distributing LLC. *Cellar Selection.* —R.V.

abv: 13.5%

Price: \$NA

**89 Chateau de Pizay 2010 Morgon.** Still firmly tannic, this is a wine that needs aging. It has weight and a dry core to go with its rich dark cherry and red berry fruits. There is also a fine juicy element that pushes right through the tannins. Keep for a year. David Milligan Selections. —R.V.

abv: 13%

Price: \$15

**87 Domaine de la Combe au Loup 2009 Morgon.** Rather light for the vintage, this is still an attractively fruity wine. It has tannins, black currant and plum skin fruit. Juicy, lively, ready to drink. Fruit of the Vines, Inc. —R.V.

abv: 12.5%

Price: \$NA

**86 Louis Chevallier 2009 Morgon.** A solid, chunky wine, its fruit layers of jammy plums over light tannins. It has some richness along with an attractive juicy character that gives a dusty, almost sweet aftertaste. Massanois Imports. —R.V.

abv: 13%

Price: \$17

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## MOULIN-À-VENT

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**91 Château de la Terrière 2009 Cuvée de la Lure (Moulin-à-Vent).** A smoothly ripe wine, with swathes of cherry and black currant fruits balanced by lively acidity. The wine, with its richness and the tannic structure, could well age for 3–4 years, although its fruitiness makes it delicious now. Ruby Wines Inc. *Cellar Selection.* —R.V.

abv: 13%

Price: \$23

**90 Georges Duboeuf 2009 Prestige (Moulin-à-Vent).** A rich, smoky wine, with some tannins from toast as well as fruit. The sweet red fruits are just ready to push forward to take over from the oak to give a powerful, ageworthy wine. —R.V.

abv: NA

Price: \$NA

**87 Loron et Fils 2005 Réserve Caveau Vieilles Vignes (Moulin-à-Vent).** Showing definite maturity, this remains a solid, chunky wine. It has richness as well as a light structure of acidity and raspberries. It is very ready to drink now. David Bowler Wine. —R.V.

abv: 13.5%

Price: \$26

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## RÉGNIÉ

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**86 Chateau de Pizay 2010 Régnié.** With some weight and attractive fruit richness, here is a wine that brings out all the red fruitiness of a Beaujolais cru, while not being unduly burdened with tannin or structure. Its fruitiness should be taken advantage of now. David Milligan Selections. —R.V.

abv: 13%

Price: \$14

**85 Domaine de la Combe au Loup 2009 Régnié.** Light and fruity, full of red cherries, sweet tannins and attractive acidity. The wine is softly

attractive with some of the warmth of the year. Fruit of the Vines, Inc. —R.V.

abv: 12.5%

Price: \$NA

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## SAINT-AMOUR

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**89 Domaine de Billards 2009 Saint-Amour.** With some firm tannins and considerable red fruit juiciness, this is a wine that combines a good fruity character with a solid structure. The balancing side is the acidity and very fresh finish. David Bowler Wine. —R.V.

abv: 13%

Price: \$21

**89 Gaël Martin 2009 En Pressins (Saint-Amour).** Smooth and rich wine with fresh blackberry fruits and a hint of raisins. The wine relishes both its acidity and its ripe fruit character, the tannins giving an attractive final support. Fruit of the Vines, Inc. —R.V.

abv: 13%

Price: \$NA

**87 Domaine le Cotoyon 2010 Saint-Amour.** A very structured wine, still young. It has tannins as well as ripe red cherry fruit flavors and considerable acidity. It's a wine for aging another year. Fruit of the Vines, Inc. —R.V.

abv: 13%

Price: \$NA

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## OTHER BEAUJOLAIS

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**90 Château de Fleurie 2009 Fleurie.** An attractively fruity wine, with the richness of 2009 giving sweet red cherry fruits, blackberries and a balanced layer of tannin. Produced in the vineyards of the 18th century Château de Fleurie, this is a wine with good concentration and weight as well as fine fruit. David Bowler Wine. —R.V.

abv: 13%

Price: \$21

**87 Domaine de la Combe au Loup 2009 Chiroubles.** An elegant style of wine, this packs concentrated cherry and blackberry fruits. There is a light tannic character, attractive acidity and stylish fruit. Fruit of the Vines, Inc. —R.V.

abv: 12.5%

Price: \$NA

**85 Labouré-Roi 2009 St Amand Vieilles Vignes (Beaujolais-Villages).** A soft, rounded wine, with delicious plum and black cherry fruit flavors. It is rich, along with acidity, ripe tannins and an easy, light finish. Palm Bay International. —R.V.

abv: 12%

Price: \$NA

**84 Chateau de Pizay 2010 Beaujolais.** Fresh, fruity, red berry flavors, with only a light touch of tannin. This is classic Beaujolais, ready to drink in the next few months. David Milligan Selections. —R.V.

abv: 12.5%

Price: \$13

**84 Louis Chevallier 2009 Beaujolais-Villages.** A red fruit flavored wine, light and packed with acidity. The wine may not have the richness of the vintage, but it does have a fine line in red cherry flavors. Drink now. Massanois Imports. —R.V.

abv: 12%

Price: \$13

**83 Jaffelin 2009 Beaujolais-Villages.** Rather dilute wine, it does have some fresh cherry flavors with very soft tannins and a clean line of acidity. For the vintage, it could have done with more concentration. Epic Wines. —R.V.  
**abv:** 12.5% **Price:** \$13

## WHITE BEAUJOLAIS

**85 Château de Pizay 2010 Beaujolais Blanc.** A soft wine, although it does have a good mineral edge. The acidity, citrus and white fruit flavors are well in balance to give a fruity, textured wine that is ready to drink. David Milligan Selections. —R.V.  
**abv:** 12.5% **Price:** \$13

## DRY ITALIAN WINES

### SOAVE

**87 Allegrini 2010 Soave.** Packaged in an attractively light and transparent bottle, this crisp and delicious Soave lives up to its image thanks to fine aromas of stone fruit, citrus and white flower. There's a tight mineral note on the dry close. Winebow. —M.L.  
**abv:** 13% **Price:** \$13

**87 Latium di Morini 2010 Campo le Calle (Soave).** Here's a light and elegant Soave highlighted by pretty mineral notes and tighter aromas of peach and citrus. Fresh crispness keeps the palate clean and ready for the next delicious sip. Jan D'Amore Wines. —M.L.  
**abv:** 14% **Price:** \$16

**86 Domini Veneti 2010 Ca' de Nà (Soave Classico).** This Soave Classico offers aromas of mature melon, peach and a touch of pink grapefruit. It definitely boasts a thick, dense style with fresh acidity on the close. Wine Twist. —M.L.  
**abv:** 13% **Price:** \$NA

**86 Latium di Morini 2010 Soave.** A small percentage of Trebbiano di Soave is added to this Garganega-based white wine and brings a touch of mineral or dried sage to the overall aromatic profile. This no-fuss, informal wine would pair with appetizers or salad lunches. Jan D'Amore Wines. —M.L.  
**abv:** 12.5% **Price:** \$13

**86 Villa Erbice 2008 Vigneto Panvinio (Soave Superiore).** Sporting a slightly oxidized style (this expression of Soave Superiore does see some oak aging), Vigneto Panvinio opens with butterscotch and apricot aromas followed by candied fruit and drying mineral. Masciarelli Wine Co. —M.L.  
**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$25

**85 Villa Erbice 2009 Soave Superiore.** This is an easy, upfront Soave that delivers cool aromas of lemon zest and apricot with fresh crispness on the close. Pair it with shrimp appetizers and spicy ginger sauce. Masciarelli Wine Co. —M.L.  
**abv:** 13% **Price:** \$15

## OTHER DRY WHITES

**91 Cantina Produttori San Michele Appiano 2010 St. Valentin Sauvignon (Alto Adige).** Definitely one of Italy's top three Sauvignon Blancs, this beautifully luminous wine presents pristine, cool-climate fragrances of white flower, passion fruit, fresh mountain herbs, honey and white almond. Zesty acidity caps a smooth, silky mouthfeel. Martin Scott Wines. —M.L.  
**abv:** 14% **Price:** \$38

**88 Cantina Tollo 2010 Terre di Chieti.** One of the most exciting white wine varieties to emerge from Italy in the past five years, Pecorino delivers a sturdy, creamy mouthfeel backed by intense aromas of apricot, butterscotch, candied orange peel and fragrant yellow rose. Pair it with pasta, white meats or shellfish. Zig Zagando. —M.L.  
**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$19

**88 Tenute Soletta 2010 Isola dei Nuraghi.** Here's a special blended white wine from Sardinia that shows the natural density and richness to pair with lobster or baked halibut. There's a soft, creamy mouthfeel that is backed by aromas of stone fruit and melon. Tricana Imports. —M.L.  
**abv:** 14% **Price:** \$32

**87 ColleStefano 2010 Verdicchio di Matelica.** This interesting Italian white is gaining a bit of a cult following in the United States. Made with organically grown Verdicchio grapes, the wine shows pristine aromas of passion and stone fruit with a crisp, zesty feel in the mouth. It would pair perfectly with sea food or light lunches. Oliver McCrum Wines. —M.L.  
**abv:** 13% **Price:** \$18

**86 Santa Maria La Palma 2010 Aragosta (Vermentino di Sardegna).** Aragosta is one of those wonderfully light and crisp Italian whites that would pair so well with the seafood dishes we love most (fried calamari and crab cakes, for example). Tonic aromas of peach, citrus and white flower emerge from the nose. Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd. **Best Buy.** —M.L.  
**abv:** 12% **Price:** \$11

**85 Tommasi 2010 Il Sestante Vigneto San Martino (Lugana).** This bright white wine is subdued aromatically but it does move forward with nice crispness and freshness in the mouth. Medium body and intensity is accented by stone fruit and drying mineral. Rolar. —M.L.  
**abv:** 12.5% **Price:** \$15

## SARDINIAN REDS

**93 Santadi 2006 Terre Brune Superiore (Carignano del Sulcis).** For full review see page 5. **Cellar Selection.**  
**abv:** NA **Price:** \$68

**92 Agricola Punica 2007 Barrua (Isola dei Nuraghi).** A blend of Carignano (85%), Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot, Barrua is the so-called Sassaica of Sardinia. (In fact, it represents a partner-

ship between the island's most prestigious co-op, Cantina di Santadi and the makers of Tuscany's Sassaica.) This beautiful vintage shows wild sage, black currant and loads of soft spice. Kobrand. —M.L.  
**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$60

**91 Sella & Mosca 2005 Marchese di Villamarena Cabernet Sauvignon (Alghero).** This rich, oak-aged Cabernet Sauvignon shows that Sardinia can produce both indigenous and international grape varieties that compete with the best wines of the world. This opulent expression delivers dense berry flavors and dried fruit backed by mineral, spice and polished tannins. Palm Bay International. —M.L.  
**abv:** 13% **Price:** \$68

**90 Agricola Punica 2008 Montessu (Isola dei Nuraghi).** This wonderful blend of Carignano (60%), Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc and Syrah is one of the island's emerging "super Sardinian" wines. Plush, rich and extracted, the wine offers the density and longevity to stand up to veal or pork. Kobrand. —M.L.  
**abv:** 14% **Price:** \$35

## OTHER DRY REDS

**92 Mezzacorona 2005 Nos Riserva (Teroldego Rotaliano).** For full review see page 6.  
**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$35

**87 Monteci 2006 Costa delle Corone (Amarone della Valpolicella Classico).** This is a big wine both in terms of consistency and alcohol (17%). In fact, it's too big in many respects and it's hard to image what foods can stand up to this power. The wine is redolent of brambly sour notes of earth and forest floor and there's a touch of bitter astringency on the close. Holiday Beverage. —M.L.  
**abv:** 17% **Price:** \$110

## SWEET ITALIAN WINES

### PICOLIT

**92 Jacùss 2007 Picolit (Colli Orientali del Friuli).** There's an element of candied fruit and butterscotch that defines this luscious Picolit dessert wine. It opens with a deep amber color, syrupy sweetness and a very long finish accented by pine resin and maple syrup. Vitis Imports. —M.L.  
**abv:** 13% **Price:** \$55/500 ml

**91 Valentino Butussi 2007 Picolit (Colli Orientali del Friuli).** This amber-colored Picolit opens with beautiful intensity and ripe aromas of apricot, honey, orange zest and candied fruit. It's dense, soft and smooth with a piquant touch of citrusy acidity on the dense, sweet close. The Shepherd Company. —M.L.  
**abv:** 13% **Price:** \$NA/500 ml

**90 Colutta 2007 Picolit (Colli Orientali del Friuli).** Packaged in a long, elegant bottle with a wax seal, this precious Picolit dessert wine offers aromas of stone fruit, apricot, dried mint, orange zest and

ginger. It shows pretty complexity and a smooth, creamy mouthfeel. Wine Emporium. —M.L.

**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$55/375 ml

**90 Conte d'Attimis-Maniago 2007 Picolit (Colli Orientali del Friuli).** This golden Picolit, a rare dessert wine from northeast Italy, opens with bright aromas of apricot, peach soda, dried herb, honey and toasted nut. It's smooth, sweet and generous on the long finish. Try pairing it with aged cheese instead of dessert. Siena Imports. —M.L.

**abv:** 14% **Price:** \$65/500 ml

**90 Comelli 2009 Eoos Picolit (Colli Orientali del Friuli).** Picolit is a rare and precious dessert wine from northeast Italy that delivers extreme concentration and sweetness thanks to extremely low vineyard yields. This expression shows a deep golden color with apricot, honey, orange zest and fragrant honeysuckle. Peter Warren Selections. —M.L.

**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$20/500 ml

**90 La Roncaia 2008 Picolit (Colli Orientali del Friuli).** There's a soft candy-like element here that recalls butterscotch, caramel and honey-coated almond. The wine is sweet, thick and syrupy with apricot and candied orange peel on the close. Domaine Select Wine Estates. —M.L.

**abv:** 12% **Price:** \$67/375 ml

**89 Dario Coos 2009 Picolit (Colli Orientali del Friuli).** This zesty Picolit opens with a luminous, golden color and vibrant aromas of lemon zest, stone fruit, pear and Golden Delicious apple. There's a touch of honey and white almond that accent an elegant, easy close. Vin Divino. —M.L.

**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$95/500 ml

## VIN SANTO

**94 Castello di Volpaia 2004 Vin Santo del Chianti Classico.** Volpaia is the proud author of one of Chianti Classico's most enjoyable dessert wines. This luscious Vin Santo (a blend of Trebbiano and Malvasia aged in small barrels called *caratelli*) is velvety soft and decadent with lingering tones of orange zest, resin, dried ginger, candied fruit and a tiny hint of musk. Wilson Daniels Ltd. —M.L.

**abv:** 16% **Price:** \$44/375 ml

**92 I Veroni 2004 Vin Santo del Chianti Rufina.** A fabulous dessert blend of Malvasia, Trebbiano and Sangiovese, this Vin Santo from the Chianti Rufina area is aged seven years in caratelli (made with mixed woods spanning from chestnut to cherry). It shows a bright golden color and intense aromas of resin, butterscotch and candied fruit. Very nice. Jandell Selections. —M.L.

**abv:** 17% **Price:** \$34/375 ml

**91 Badia di Morrona 2006 Vin Santo del Chianti.** Rich and syrupy, this amber-colored Vin Santo shows tones of butterscotch, honey-covered almond, candied fruit and pressed rose. The wine feels silky and smooth with a long finish. —M.L.

**abv:** 16.5% **Price:** \$NA/500 ml

**90 Fattoria Del Cerro 2004 Antonio da Sangallo (Vin Santo di Montepulciano).** A blend of Grechetto and Trebbiano, this attractive Vin Santo from the Montepulciano area of Tuscany offers aromas of resin, butterscotch, caramel, toasted almond and sun-dried apricot. A crisp close helps wash away any lingering sweetness. Vias Imports. —M.L.

**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$39/375 ml

## MOSCATO

**93 Barberani 2008 Passito Villa Monticelli Moscato (Umbria).** Gorgeous and syrupy, this Passito dessert wine made with aromatic Moscato grapes is beautifully fragrant with ripe apricot, honey, peach and white almond. It's smooth, soft, rich and leaves a long candied fruit aftertaste. Vinifera Imports. **Editors' Choice.** —M.L.

**abv:** 11.1% **Price:** \$45/500 ml

**93 Kellerei Kaltern Caldaro 2007 Castel Giovanelli Serenade Passito Moscato Giallo (Alto Adige).** Here's a beautifully fragrant and intense dessert wine that offers delicate aromas of peach, apricot, honey, almond and lemon blossom. Feminine, pristine and very elegant, pair this wine with your best foie gras. Omnivines Distribution. **Editors' Choice.** —M.L.

**abv:** 11.5% **Price:** \$20/375 ml

**90 Maculan 2010 Dindarello Moscato (Veneto).** Dindarello is a fresh and lively dessert wine (made with fragrant Moscato grapes) that shows immediate aromas of lemon zest, peach cobbler, white almond and chopped mint. It boasts medium density capped by a touch of zesty grapefruit. Winebow. —M.L.

**abv:** 11.5% **Price:** \$19/375 ml

**89 Tenuta Soletta 2006 Hermes Moscato (Isola dei Nuraghi).** Hermes is made with air-dried Moscato grapes on the beautiful island of Sardinia. The amber-colored wine is redolent of candied fruit, butterscotch, caramel, orange zest and honey. Dried ginger and sharp resin characterize the close. Tricana Imports. —M.L.

**abv:** 15% **Price:** \$38/500 ml

**88 Emilio Bulfon 2009 Moscato Rosa (Delle Venezie).** This dark rosé Moscato Rosa dessert wine shows brambly notes of forest floor and wild cherry backed by cassis liqueur and dried spice. Pair the wine with dried biscuits or sponge cake with a fresh fruit filling. Imports Inc. —M.L.

**abv:** 14% **Price:** \$28/500 ml

## MARSALA

**91 Cantine Florio NV Donna Franca Superiore Riserva (Marsala).** Aged in oak for over 15 years, Donna Franca is a modern expression of Marsala with a dark amber color and luscious aromas of maple syrup, brown sugar and candied fruit. It feels warm, thick and textured on the palate with resin, honey and roasted chestnut. Banfi Vintners. —M.L.

**abv:** 19% **Price:** \$NA/500 ml

**91 Cantine Florio 1997 Baglio Florio (Marsala).** Aged, refined and evolved, this Marsala Vergine shows the renewed potential of one of southern Italy's most historic wines. Powerful, determined and high in alcohol, it shows resin, tar, candied fruit and butterscotch with loads of intensity and thrust. Banfi Vintners. —M.L.

**abv:** 19% **Price:** \$NA/500 ml

## OTHER SWEET WINES

**97 Fattoria Petrola 2001 San Petrola White Blend (Tuscany).** In a league with Italy's best dessert wines, San Petrola is a superrich and concentrated wine that almost has a hard time pouring out of the bottle. The wine does indeed have the consistency of maple syrup, with a deep brown color and gorgeous aromas of toasted almond, chestnut honey, crème caramel and crème brûlée. Vintus LLC. **Cellar Selection.** —M.L.

**abv:** 11% **Price:** \$60/375 ml

**94 Barberani 2007 Calcaia (Orvieto Classico Superiore).** Barberani makes some of the best dessert wines in central Italy and Calcaia shows this proud winemaking tradition very clearly. A result of noble rot, this sweet blend of Grechetto, Trebbiano and Sauvignon Blanc opens with delicate floral notes backed by citrus blossom, white almond and honey. Vinifera Imports. —M.L.

**abv:** 10.5% **Price:** \$45/500 ml

**93 Maculan 2006 Acinobilli Vespaiolo (Veneto).** Aged two years in new French oak, Acinobilli is a super intense and unique wine with enormous complexity and personality. There's a touch of spearmint and peppermint at the back of candied fruit, apricot, butterscotch and vanilla cream. Winebow. —M.L.

**abv:** 12.5% **Price:** \$110/375 ml

**93 Gini 2007 Col Foscarin (Recioto di Soave).** Here's a beautiful dessert wine (made with Garganega grapes, native to northern Italy) that would marry a platter of mixed cheeses or a delectable slice of foie gras. The syrupy and sweet wine delivers rich layers of candied fruit, apricot and honey. Michael Skurnik Wines. —M.L.

**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$NA/375 ml

**92 Castello di Bossi 2002 Vin San Laurentino (Toscana).** A sweet blend of red Sangiovese grapes and white Trebbiano (aged nine years in small *caratelli* barrels), this thick dessert wine very much resembles Tuscany's Vin Santo. It opens with dense concentration and a copperish color with deep aromas of butterscotch, toasted almond and gingersnap. Winebow. —M.L.

**abv:** 10% **Price:** \$95/375 ml

**92 Castello di Bossi 2001 Vin San Laurentino (Toscana).** This Vin Santo-inspired dessert wine (aged 96 months in oak) shows dark aromas of resin, tar, spicy ginger, butterscotch and caramel. The wine's color is deep amber and copper and the mouth-



# **BUYING**guide

feel is rich, chewy and extremely persistent. Winebow. —M.L.

abv: 11.5%

Price: \$95/375 ml

**91 Domini Veneti 2008 Costacalda Passito (Veneto).** Here's a beautifully crisp and golden Passito dessert wine that seems to shine bright with Italian sunlight intensity. The velvety wine is redolent of dried apricot, peach cobbler and almond honey. Wine Twist. —M.L.

abv: 13%

Price: \$NA/500 ml

**90 Ca' Rugate 2008 L'Eremita (Recioto della Valpolicella).** L'Eremita is a spicy Recioto della Valpolicella (a red dessert wine made from the same blend of grapes as Amarone) that boasts savory tones of cigar box, barbecue smoke, brown sugar and teriyaki. The wine shows some tannins with an otherwise smooth and creamy mouthfeel. Saranty Imports. —M.L.

abv: 13.5%

Price: \$72/500 ml

**90 Feudi del Pisciotto 2009 Gianfranco Ferré (Sicilia).** Gewürztraminer and Sémillon are blended in this Sicilian dessert wine (named after one of fashion's most important designers) to produce an easy, creamy wine that would pair with almond cookies or pistachio cream. —M.L.

abv: 16%

Price: \$NA/500 ml

**89 Maculan 2009 Madoro (Veneto).** Madoro is a red dessert wine (a 80-20 blend of Marzemino and Cabernet Sauvignon) that ages five months in French oak for savory aromas of barbecue spice, mesquite wood and crushed clove. Sweet versus sour tones appear on the close. Winebow. —M.L.

abv: 13.5%

Price: \$60/375 ml

**88 Beccarello 2008 Passione Passito Cason Brusà (Veneto).** Here's a dessert wine made with red Refosco grapes from northern Italy that delivers savory aromas of spice, leather, tobacco and dried berry fruit. You feel the sweetness in the mouth, however, followed by soft tannins. Metropolis Wine Merchants, Inc. —M.L.

abv: 14.5%

Price: \$45/375 ml

**88 Còlpetrone 2007 Passito (Montefalco Sagrantino).** It's hard to imagine naturally tannic Sagrantino as a dessert wine but indeed this native Umbrian red grape was traditionally made in a sweet style to soften its firm astringency. Deeply red and richly concentrated, it shows chocolate, savory spice and blackberry. Drying tannins keep the palate clean. Vias Imports. —M.L.

abv: 13.5%

Price: \$49/375 ml

**88 Dario Coos 2008 Verduzzo Friulano (Ramandolo).** Ramandolo is a traditional dessert wine with roots in northeast Italy that opens with sweet aromas of candied fruit, pickled ginger and crème brûlée. A spicy touch of peppermint or dried herb keeps the mouthfeel focused and sharp. Vin Divino. —M.L.

abv: 14.5%

Price: \$69/500 ml

**88 Di Lenardo 2010 Pass the Cookies! (Venezia Giulia).** The full name of this Italian dessert wine is: In my next life, I'll be thin. Pass the Cookies! Whimsical humor aside, the Verduzzo-based

wine is made with air-dried grapes for intensely concentrated tones of butterscotch and candied fruit. Michael R. Downey Selections. —M.L.

abv: 12.5%

Price: \$25/500 ml

**88 Fortediga 2007 Trama Vendemmia Tar-diva (Maremma).** A late-harvest wine made with aromatic Traminer grapes, Trama opens with a dark brown or copper color and musky aromas of dried hay, candied fruit, apricot, candied orange peel and lemon drops. The sweet, syrupy mouthfeel is washed clean by crisp acidity. —M.L.

abv: 13.5%

Price: \$NA/500 ml

## SPANISH CAVA

### VINTAGE

**90 Huguet 2006 Gran Reserva Brut Nature (Cava).** Lemon, lime and mineral aromas are clean as a whistle. The palate is zesty, tight, moderately complex in feel and pulsing with green apple and citrus flavors. Finishes clean, with orange notes. A piercing wine that's perfect for shellfish. Classical Wines. —M.S.

abv: 12%

Price: \$28

**89 Juvé y Camps 2007 Brut Nature Gran Reserva Reserva de la Familia (Cava).** Opens with dry apple, white peach and stony aromas. The palate is crisp, clean and fairly simple, with lime and green apple flavors. Shows zest and tang on the finish, and overall the focus is on citrus and clarity. Winebow. —M.S.

abv: 12%

Price: \$17

**89 Mont Marçal 2007 Brut Reserva (Cava).** Green apple, peach and melon aromas are common but perfectly clean and inviting. The palate is refined and hints at elegance as it delivers very good lime, gooseberry and fresh celery flavors. Long and dry on the finish, with lip-smacking acidity. Classical Wines. —M.S.

abv: 11.5%

Price: \$15

**89 Sumarroca 2006 Brut Nature Gran Reserva (Cava).** Dusty and yeasty on the nose, with nectarine and peach aromas. The palate is dry and crisp, with green apple, green melon and powdered spice flavors. It's long, linear and dusty on the finish, with white pepper notes. Finely textured and fairly elegant. Frontier Wine Imports. —M.S.

abv: 11.5%

Price: \$30

**89 Vilarnau 2008 Brut Nature Reserva (Cava).** For full review see page 10.

abv: 11.5%

Price: \$18

**88 Agustí Torelló 2007 Reserva Brut (Cava).** Ripe, crisp and grassy on the nose, with distinct green fruit aromas that suggest lime and green apple. The palate is balanced and not too sheer, with good acidity and sweet, fun flavors of melon, kiwi and peach. Finishes solid and fresh. Casa Ventura Imports. —M.S.

abv: 11.5%

Price: \$22

**88 Freixenet 2008 Brut Nature Reserva (Cava).** Dry on the nose, with soda cracker,

seltzer, candle wax and lime. The palate is active but settled, with a nice, normal mix of apple and lime flavors. Long, dry and crisp on the finish. Good for seafood and salty tapas. Freixenet USA. —M.S.

abv: 12%

Price: \$14

**88 Marques de Gelida 2008 Brut Reserva Made With Organic Grapes (Cava).** Dusty, yeasty and bready in the Champagne way, but with crisp apple as well. The palate is round and full, with dry, spicy apple and melon flavors. Finishes yeasty and toasty, with texture and length. A correct Cava with some complexity. Fine Estates From Spain. —M.S.

abv: 11.5%

Price: \$18

**88 Marques de Gelida 2007 Brut Exclusive Reserva (Cava).** Begins with weight and yeasty, bready, white fruit aromas. The palate is round and full, with lime, apple and kiwi flavors. Zesty and proper on the finish, with good length and clarity. Solid and nice throughout. Fine Estates From Spain. —M.S.

abv: 11.5%

Price: \$15

**88 Marques de Monistrol 2007 Winemakers Select (Cava).** Light, airy and dusty on the nose, with apple and melon along with a touch of yeast. The palate is plump and healthy, with a good bead, nice acids and cidery, lightly briny apple and green fruit flavors. Shows some complexity beyond what's normal for Cava. Clock Tower Imports. —M.S.

abv: 12%

Price: \$15

**87 Naveran 2007 Dama (Cava).** Gold in color, with a full, yeasty bouquet that brings some baked apple. The palate is soft and rather foamy, with sweet apple and cutting lime flavors. Finishes with yeast and a mild, controlled bitterness. 85% Chardonnay and 15% Parellada. Ole Imports. —M.S.

abv: 12.5%

Price: \$20

**86 Marques de Gelida 2008 Pinot Noir Brut Reserva Rosé (Cava).** Yeasty and gaseous at first, then earthy and smoky. The palate is crisp, wet and fresh, with dry plum, cherry and a hint of cooked brown sugar. Finishes solid and sweet, and overall the wine elicits little to no complaints. Fine Estates From Spain. —M.S.

abv: 11.5%

Price: \$16

**86 Vins El Cep 2009 Kila (Cava).** Light and dry on the nose, with basic white fruit aromas that suggest peach and nectarine. The palate has a regular, solid mouthfeel and sweet flavors of apple and white stone fruits. Finishes sweet before transitioning to pithy. Good for the price. Fine Estates From Spain. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

abv: 11.5%

Price: \$8

**85 Sumarroca 2008 Brut Reserva (Cava).** Smells a bit stinky and burnt, with green, herbal aromas like rosemary and thyme popping up. The palate is sharper than most, with high acidity and angularity supporting a mix of citrus, grass and burnt, gaseous aromas. Finishes stinky, with lemon-lime notes. Frontier Wine Imports. —M.S.

abv: 11.5%

Price: \$22

**84** **Finca Torremilanos 2007 Peñalba López (Cava).** Briney citrus and apple aromas are a little green and funky but not too far off course. It tastes very much like white grapefruit with tartness. Finishes like a glass of Florida grapefruit juice, but the feel is cleansing. Grapes of Spain. —M.S.  
**abv:** 12.5% **Price:** \$16

## NONVINTAGE

**88** **Mont Marçal NV Extremarium de Mont Marçal Brut Reserva (Cava).** Smells a little green and stinky, but in the mouth it delivers pure lemon, apple and other refined white fruit flavors. There's good mouthfeel here and a grassy finish with lime and kiwi. Fairly standard and lean in composition. Classical Wines. —M.S.  
**abv:** 11.5% **Price:** \$25

**87** **Berberana NV Gran Tradición Brut (Cava).** Simple lime and saline aromas are clean and fresh. The palate is juicy and tight, with lime, apple and dry spice flavors. Finishes balanced and citrusy, with proper length and mouthfeel. A good but regular Cava that's done right for the price. MHW, Ltd. **Best Buy.** —M.S.  
**abv:** 11.5% **Price:** \$10

**87** **Freixenet NV Cordon Rosado Brut (Cava).** For full review see page 13. **Best Buy.**  
**abv:** 12% **Price:** \$12

**87** **Freixenet NV Elyssia Gran Cuvée Brut (Cava).** Shows good freshness and nice apple, lime and peach aromas. The acidity is there, so it's lithe and forward, with lift and a good bubble bead. Tastes like your basic brut but it's a bit more refined on the tongue. Freixenet USA. —M.S.  
**abv:** 11.5% **Price:** \$18

**87** **Juvé y Camps NV Cinta Purpura Brut Reserva (Cava).** A new value-priced Cava from Juvé y Camps that's a bit cidery on the nose, with tire rubber notes as well. The palate is balanced, sweet and friendly, with apple, mango and candied lime flavors. Mild and lightly leesy on the finish. Winebow. —M.S.  
**abv:** 12% **Price:** \$13

**87** **Marques de Monistrol NV Selección Especial Brut (Cava).** Light apple and spice aromas are simple, straightforward and appealing. The palate shows good balance, freshness and tasty flavors of candied pineapple and orange. Finishes juicy and correct. Clock Tower Imports. **Best Buy.** —M.S.  
**abv:** 11.5% **Price:** \$10

**87** **Mas de Monistrol NV MM Masia 1882 Selección Especial Brut (Cava).** Starts out with doughy yeast and heft on the nose. The palate is round and fairly smooth, with nice lemon-lime and nectarine flavors. Finishes lasting and solid, with freshness along with slightly candied, friendly flavors. MHW, Ltd. **Best Buy.** —M.S.  
**abv:** 11.5% **Price:** \$10

**87** **Mas de Monistrol NV MM Masia 1882 Selección Especial Brut Rosé (Cava).** Pretty in color, with a clean nose that's not too forced, pungent or potent. The palate has a good feel and lift, with light bubbles, nice acidity and dry flavors of red plum and nectarine. Finishes dry and composed, with a bit of elegance. MHW, Ltd. **Best Buy.** —M.S.  
**abv:** 12% **Price:** \$10

**87** **Paul Cheneau NV Blanc de Blancs Reserva Brut (Cava).** A mellow nose includes aromas of applesauce and peach. The palate is clean, smooth and round, with standard green apple and fresh apricot flavors. Turns slightly sweet on the finish, but maintains a crisp edge throughout. Pasternak Wine Imports. —M.S.  
**abv:** 12% **Price:** \$17

**87** **Segura Viudas NV Brut Reserva (Cava).** For full review see page 13. **Best Buy.**  
**abv:** 12% **Price:** \$10

**87** **Segura Viudas NV Brut Rosé (Cava).** For full review see page 14. **Best Buy.**  
**abv:** 12% **Price:** \$10

**87** **Segura Viudas NV Reserva Heredad (Cava).** Grassy and sweet smelling, with apple and lightly candied aromas. Nice and normal in the mouth, with sweet, ripe flavors of white fruits, powdered sugar and pear. Turns a bit cloying on the finish. Seems sweeter and less complex than in the past. Freixenet USA. —M.S.  
**abv:** 12% **Price:** \$25

**86** **Berberana NV Gran Tradición Rosé Brut (Cava).** A touch gritty and stinky, but mostly it's just pleasant and innocuous on the nose. The palate is crisp and tight, with foamy bubbles and then a lightly toasted, stinky set of red fruit flavors that finish sweet. Nothing spectacular but perfectly good for a Monastrell-Pinot Noir blend. MHW, Ltd. **Best Buy.** —M.S.  
**abv:** 11.5% **Price:** \$10

**86** **Castillo de Perelada NV Brut Reserva (Cava).** Basic peach and melon aromas come with lettuce and white pepper accents. The palate runs a little soft and low on acid and bubbles, while the flavor profile is sweet, with lime and apple at the core. A standard, basic Cava. MHW, Ltd. —M.S.  
**abv:** 11.5% **Price:** \$15

**86** **Evohé NV X Reserva Brut Nature (Cava).** Fairly leesy on the nose, with banana, creamy vanilla and other soft aromas. The palate is prickly, with pithy citrus and apple flavors. Finishes dry, with white pepper notes. Good but doesn't go beyond the basics. Vinum International. —M.S.  
**abv:** 11.5% **Price:** \$22

**86** **Freixenet NV Cordon Negro Extra Dry (Cava).** Fresh on the nose for an extra dry, with lime and apple aromas. Only the slightest bit cloying, with balancing acidity helping out sweet green melon flavors. Finishes nice and normal. Freixenet USA. —M.S.  
**abv:** 12% **Price:** \$12

**86** **Segura Viudas NV Aria Estate Pinot Noir (Cava).** Cherry/berry aromas are light and nice, and come with some toast. Good in the mouth, with weight but freshness. Tastes a bit sweet and sugary, with toasty edges and a finish of cherry and chocolate. Good for normal rosé Cava. Freixenet USA. —M.S.  
**abv:** 12.5% **Price:** \$14

**86** **Segura Viudas NV Extra Dry (Cava).** Clean, fruity and solid smelling, with a fresh, lightweight palate housing flavors of ginger, lime, lemongrass and powdered sugar. Easy on the finish. Textbook quaffing Cava if you like it a little sweet. Freixenet USA. **Best Buy.** —M.S.  
**abv:** 11.5% **Price:** \$10

**85** **Codorníu NV Anna de Codorníu (Cava).** Leesy and toasty smelling, but pinched and cidery in the mouth. Standard at best, with apple and nectarine flavors in front of a somewhat foxy, strained finish. Good but a bit funky and cidery. Aveniü Brands, Inc. —M.S.  
**abv:** 11.5% **Price:** \$15

**85** **Freixenet NV Carta Nevada Brut (Cava).** Neutral for the most part, with fresh acidity, light bubbles and basic apple and peach flavors. A little sweet and confected but perfectly good. Solid for simple sipping and mimosas. Freixenet USA. **Best Buy.** —M.S.  
**abv:** 12% **Price:** \$9

**85** **Freixenet NV Cordon Negro Brut (Cava).** Cidery on the nose, with a standard palate and mildly briney flavors of apple and other basic white fruits. Highly regular, with a decent finish. A quaffer or the type of Cava to mix with orange juice. Freixenet USA. —M.S.  
**abv:** 12% **Price:** \$12

**85** **Freixenet NV Elyssia Pinot Noir Brut (Cava).** Smoky on the nose, but also a bit harsh, with reedy, peppery notes. The palate is soft, creamy and low on acidity, with sweet, candied red fruit flavors that have a stinky, burnt edge. Goes down easy but has some sticking points. Freixenet USA. —M.S.  
**abv:** 11.5% **Price:** \$18

**85** **Jaume Serra NV Cristalino Brut (Cava).** For full review see page 14. **Best Buy.**  
**abv:** 11.5% **Price:** \$10

**85** **Juvé y Camps NV Pinot Noir Brut Rosé (Cava).** Red in color, with grassy aromas of clover and cherry. The palate runs soft and a little cloying, with sweet, flat, grassy flavors of plum and cherry. Candied and a bit dull on the finish. Winebow. —M.S.  
**abv:** 12% **Price:** \$20

**85** **Paul Cheneau NV Lady of Spain Brut (Cava).** Sweet apple and peach aromas set up a foamy, simple palate with short, basic flavors of applesauce and generic citrus. Round on the finish, with a lasting impression of cider and apple pulp. Good for a standard quaffer. Pasternak Wine Imports. —M.S.  
**abv:** 12% **Price:** \$14

**85 Segura Viudas NV Aria Estate Brut (Cava).** Slightly heavy and wheaty on the nose, but not yeasty or complex. The palate is big, chunky and ripe, with sweet mango and apple flavors. Gets a touch flabby on the finish but stays upright and correct. Freixenet USA. —M.S.  
**abv:** 11.5% **Price:** \$14

**84 Jaume Serra NV Cristalino Brut Rosé (Cava).** Alfalfa and hay stack are the lead aromas, with red fruit playing second fiddle. The palate is soft and foamy, with stinky, lightly burnt plum flavors. Finishes with burnt brown sugar flavors and mild bitterness. CIV/USA. —M.S.  
**abv:** 11.5% **Price:** \$10

**84 Segura Viudas NV Aria Estate Extra Dry (Cava).** Sweet and corny on the nose, and then soft and sweet in the mouth, with candy corn and cereal flavors. Finishes candied, sort of like a glass of corn flakes topped with a sparkle. Freixenet USA. —M.S.  
**abv:** 14% **Price:** \$14

**84 Vicente Gandia NV Hoya de Cadenas Brut (Cava).** Neutral on the nose, with a touch of matchstick and sulfur. Good in the mouth but foamy, with dry, grassy white fruit and green herb flavors. Lightly herbal and lemony on the finish. Vicente Gandia PLA. —M.S.  
**abv:** 11.5% **Price:** \$10

**83 Marques de Monistrol NV Selección Especial Semi Seco (Cava).** Opens with aromas of mustard and rye seed. The palate is soft, clunky and a bit cloying, with sweet, gummy, muddled apple and candied mango flavors. Finishes confected, with a tropical leaning. Not the best style for Cava. Clock Tower Imports. —M.S.  
**abv:** 11% **Price:** \$10

**83 Muga NV Conde de Haro Brut (Cava).** Bready and lightly maderized, with less than fresh aromas. There's weight and maturity to this Cava along with doughy apple flavors. Sputters and flattens on the finish, which is chunky. Fine Estates From Spain. —M.S.  
**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$27

## SPANISH REDS

### RIOJA

**94 Muga 2004 Prado Enea Gran Reserva (Rioja).** For full review see page 4. *Cellar Selection.*  
**abv:** 14% **Price:** \$66

**93 Bodegas Landaluce 2005 Capricho de Landaluce (Rioja).** Pure and penetrating, with full berry aromas and power throughout. Tight and generous in the mouth, with nice acidity and structured tannins. Tastes toasty and black, with loads of berry, chocolate and spice flavors. Impressive and big; drink now through 2017. Bronco Wine Company. —M.S.  
**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$50

**93 Viña Olabarri 2004 Gran Reserva (Rioja).** Compact and solid as stone on the nose, with leather, earth, tobacco, spice and botanical aromas accenting bold berry fruit. Superb balance and grip showcase black fruit, chocolate and fine oak flavors. Toasty and quite fine as a whole. Drink now through 2016. P-S Wines. *Editors' Choice.* —M.S.  
**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$32

**92 Baron De Ley 2005 7 Viñas Reserva (Rioja).** Dense from the start, with ripe berry, plum and a pinch of lemon peel on a studly bouquet. This is a healthy, vibrant, modern wine with lots of life and balance; it's drinkable now and will give toasty black fruit flavors and chocolaty warmth. Or age for up to another five years to gain more subtleties. Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd. —M.S.  
**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$68

**92 Marques de la Concordia 2005 Hacienda de Susar (Rioja).** Smoky aromas of leather, balsam wood, tobacco and berry fruit are totally appealing. The palate is full and tight, with ripe flavors of berry and plum accented by coconut, vanilla and chocolate, all of which come courtesy of new oak. Smooth and classy on the finish; pretty much everything reads right here. Tempranillo, Syrah, Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon. MHW, Ltd. —M.S.  
**abv:** 14% **Price:** \$50

**92 Sierra Cantabria 2007 Reserva Única (Rioja).** For full review see page 6.  
**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$29

**92 Valsacro 2005 Dioro (Rioja).** Hefty and a tiny bit herbal on the nose, with tomato, red berry and spice aromas. The palate is perfectly formed and balanced, with roasted berry, smoked meat and earthy flavors. Turns juicy and dry on what amounts to a tight finish. Excellent modern Rioja to drink now through 2015. Kysela Père et Fils. —M.S.  
**abv:** 14% **Price:** \$33

**92 Viña Eguía 2007 Reserva (Rioja).** A sensational deal can be had with this wine, which opens with crusty berry aromas before shifting to cola, lemon peel and licorice. Tight and structured on the palate, with cherry, plum, vanilla and spice flavors. Harmonious and smooth; integrated and just rich enough. Drink now through 2013. Quintessential Wines. *Editors' Choice.* —M.S.  
**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$19

**91 Berberana 2003 Viña Alarde Gran Reserva (Rioja).** Mature, solid and alluring on the bouquet, with cigar box, dried leaves, citrus peel and mature berry fruit aromas. Stylish, lifted and fresh in the mouth, with herb, tobacco, caramel and dried fruit flavors. Composed throughout, with coffee and mocha on the finish. Drink now through 2014. MHW, Ltd. —M.S.  
**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$25

**91 Bodegas Landaluce 2007 Capricho de Landaluce (Rioja).** Forceful and fully oaked, with dark, rubbery, minty black fruit flavors. The palate is a bit rugged but solid as granite. Tastes toasty and

roasted, with black fruit and licorice flavors front and center. Rolls along well on the finish, showing lemon zest and clove notes. Drink now through 2014. Bronco Wine Company. —M.S.  
**abv:** 50% **Price:** \$50

**91 Castillo de Cuzcurrita 2005 Cerrado de Castillo (Rioja).** Not too loud or vocal on the nose; it offers basic but entirely attractive ripe berry aromas. Tastes like blackberry and black cherry, with ample oak adding chocolate and vanilla flavors. Baked and rich tasting but it dries out well on the finish. 375 cases made; drink now through 2016. Winebow. —M.S.  
**abv:** 14% **Price:** \$85

**91 Criadores de Rioja 2004 Castillo de Clavijo Gran Reserva (Rioja).** Rusty to the eye, then dry, spicy and elegant on the nose in a traditional manner. Focused and crisp in the mouth, with juicy currant and cherry flavors sweetened by cocoa. Long and remains bright on the finish. Drink this classy wine now through 2014. Saranty Imports. —M.S.  
**abv:** 12.5% **Price:** \$25

**91 Viña Olabarri 2005 Reserva (Rioja).** Smooth and attractive cola, berry, spice, tobacco and vanilla aromas lead to an agile palate with full-scale plum, berry and spice flavors. There's a slight roasted element to this modern Rioja as well as pretty oak and chocolate notes. A definite winner to drink now through 2015. P-S Wines. —M.S.  
**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$25

**90 Beronia 2006 Reserva (Rioja).** For full review see page 7.  
**abv:** 14% **Price:** \$20

**90 Bodegas Franco-Españolas 2004 Rioja Bordón Gran Reserva Tempranillo (Rioja).** For full review see page 7.  
**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$24

**90 Bodegas Muriel 2007 Vendimia Selección Reserva (Rioja).** A medium-intensity example of a well-made wine that doesn't overpower or isn't overoaked. Rose petal, brick dust, leather and vanilla aromas set up a mostly fresh palate with plum, berry and herbal flavors. Shows some barrel spice and sweetness on the finish. Right there for \$20. Quintessential Wines. —M.S.  
**abv:** 13% **Price:** \$20

**90 Bodegas Roda 2009 Sela (Rioja).** Ripe from the beginning, with big berry aromas matched by sweet molasses and brown sugar aromas. Round, full and jammy in the mouth, with sweet berry flavors and notes of mild spices and vanilla. Long and just a bit oaky on the finish. Nice and approachable; drink now through 2013. Kobrand. —M.S.  
**abv:** 14% **Price:** \$33

**90 Castillo Labastida 2007 Crianza (Rioja).** Smoky, earthy and very nice up front, with plum and berry aromas. The palate is lifted and focused, with juicy, bright flavors of red berry, mild citrus and chocolaty oak. Long, smooth and nicely oaked on the finish. Just right for the price. Winebow. *Best Buy.* —M.S.  
**abv:** 14% **Price:** \$15



**90 Darien 2003 Seleccion (Rioja).** Leafy, rooty aromas fold in earthy berry scents and chocolate. Mature on the palate, with baked plum, sweet spice and tobacco flavors. Ripe, long and friendly on the finish, with more than adequate structure and tightness. Contains one-third Mazuelo in addition to Tempranillo, which is a lot by Rioja standards. Drink now. Signature Imports. —M.S.  
**abv:** 14% **Price:** \$40

**90 Marqués de Cáceres 2004 Gran Reserva (Rioja).** For full review see page 9.  
**abv:** 14% **Price:** \$35

**90 Marqués de Murrieta 2006 Finca Ygay Reserva (Rioja).** Perfumed and a touch exotic for Rioja, with coconut and floral berry aromas. Definitely full and ripe in the mouth, with sweet flavors that go back and forth between baked and sugary and rich and rewarding. A sweet, mature wine at its core, with molasses and brown sugar. Maisons Marques & Domaines USA. —M.S.  
**abv:** 14% **Price:** \$26

**89 Baron De Ley 2006 Reserva (Rioja).** Smooth on the nose, with aromas of buttery oak, floral hints and lightly baked berry fruit. Maintains freshness and clarity on the palate, which has good weight and true flavors of dill, cherry and dried berries. Hits the spot despite being a bit oaky. Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd. —M.S.  
**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$20

**89 Bodegas Palacio 2006 Glorioso Reserva Especial (Rioja).** Dark and rubbery at first, with cheesy, leathery aromas that settle on classic dried fruit and vanilla. The palate is medium in weight, with tomatoey plum, earth and finally chocolate flavors. Turns toward coffee on the finish. HAB North America. —M.S.  
**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$20

**89 Covila 2004 II Reserva (Rioja).** Fresh plum and berry aromas come with a touch of barrel resin. The palate is lively, tight and racy, with dried cherry, fresh tomato, leather and herbal flavors. Finishes long, warm and minty, and it improves bit by bit with airing and time. Drink now. Scoperta Importing Co. Inc. —M.S.  
**abv:** 14% **Price:** \$21

**89 CVNE 2006 Reserva (Rioja).** A lot is going on up front; there's cassis, raisin, prune and dill aromas. Medium to full in the mouth, with lively berry, plum and spice flavors. Not too sweet and fairly long and earthy on the finish. A pure example of Rioja Reserva. Europvin. —M.S.  
**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$20

**89 Fernández de Piñero 2004 Vitium Reserva (Rioja).** Big and furry smelling on the bouquet, with leathery, earthy top aromas and balsam wood and berry below. Bursts in the mouth with acidity and wild berry fruit, creating a choppy feel. Powerful Rioja, with a coffee flavor to the finish. Bob Bofman Selections. —M.S.  
**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$30

**89 Marqués de Cáceres 2005 Reserva Tempranillo (Rioja).** Saturated and dark, with prune, dried cheese and leather on the nose. The body is full and offers good tannins to prop up chewy, baked flavors of blackberry, dark plum and chocolate. Very nice, easygoing and ready to drink now. Vineyard Brands. —M.S.  
**abv:** 14% **Price:** \$25

**89 Montecillo 2003 Gran Reserva (Rioja).** For full review see page 9.  
**abv:** 13% **Price:** \$25

**89 Ramirez de la Piscina 2007 Selección Crianza (Rioja).** Charred and lemony smelling, with roasted blackberry, grilled beef and toasty oak aromas. The palate is layered and thick, with almost burnt black fruit flavors followed by licorice and prune on the finish. Oaky and smooth for a crianza. Fine Estates From Spain. —M.S.  
**abv:** 14% **Price:** \$24

**88 Bodegas Landaluce 2007 Fincas de Landaluce Crianza (Rioja).** Leathery and jammy smelling at first, then it settles on solid berry fruit and spice. Runs full and tannic in the mouth, with lightly herbal tasting berry and plum flavors. Shows some oak and ample spice on the finish. Plump, full and generous. Bronco Wine Company. —M.S.  
**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$19

**88 Bodegas Muriel 2004 Vendimia Seleccionada Gran Reserva (Rioja).** Somewhat neutral on the nose, with light cherry and raspberry aromas. Solid in the mouth, with slightly clacky tannins and flavors of earthy red fruits, light oak and earth. Just ripe and racy enough on the finish, with a calm, reserved personality. Quintessential Wines. —M.S.  
**abv:** 13% **Price:** \$30

**88 Bodegas Palacio 2008 Cosme Palacio 1894 Tinto (Rioja).** Generally 88-pointers don't call for cellaring, but this one could gain style points with time in the bottle. Now it's dark and promising, with berry, cherry, earth and tobacco. It's also hard but manageable, with lightly herbal blackberry, cherry and brown sugar flavors. Finishes dark and toasty. HAB North America. *Cellar Selection.* —M.S.  
**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$60

**88 Castillo Labastida 2005 Reserva (Rioja).** Opens with leather and rubber and quickly moves to dry cherry, spice and balsam wood. The palate is balanced and healthy, with fairly thick and meaty plum and berry flavors cut by proper acids. Long on the finish, with a tobacco note and lasting berry length. Winebow. —M.S.  
**abv:** 14% **Price:** \$23

**88 Covila 2007 II Crianza (Rioja).** Sweet berry aromas blend with dark chocolate and leather on the nose. The palate is proper feeling and well balanced, with oak-driven chocolaty flavors supporting berry fruit. Finishes with a dry, spicy aftertaste. Scoperta Importing Co. Inc. —M.S.  
**abv:** 14% **Price:** \$14

**88 Darien 2006 Reserva (Rioja).** Year in and year out this is the score this wine deserves. This vintage is meaty, with dark fruit, bacon and rubbery aromas. It's a touch hard and tannic, with ripe tomato, berry and cherry flavors. Bright, forward and tannic; should age fairly well. Signature Imports. —M.S.  
**abv:** 14% **Price:** \$26

**88 Maetierra Dominum 2006 Gavanza (Rioja).** Subtle berry and rooty aromas create an inviting nose. The palate is full and chunky, with grabby tannins that thicken up cherry, herb and spice flavors. A little bit rich in style, with chocolate and earthiness to the finish. Ole Imports. —M.S.  
**abv:** 14% **Price:** \$22

**88 Marques de la Concordia 2005 Signa Reserva (Rioja).** Floral and a touch sweet smelling, with exotic spice, leather and earthy aromas. It's medium-bodied, with a bit of chunkiness offset by good acidity. Tastes of herbs, fresh tomato, pepper and red fruits. Juicy, tight and leathery on the finish. MHW, Ltd. —M.S.  
**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$20

**88 Marqués de Murrieta 2007 Finca Ygay Reserva (Rioja).** Cherry and raspberry aromas lead the charge, but as it airs out it becomes more raisiny and jammy smelling. The flavors are solid but distant, with simple red fruit, oak and barrel notes setting the pace. Highly drinkable and easygoing but not complex or elevated. Maisons Marques & Domaines USA. —M.S.  
**abv:** 14% **Price:** \$26

**88 Ramirez de la Piscina 2007 Crianza (Rioja).** Roasted and rustic smelling, with baked, brushy berry aromas. The palate is fresh, forward and well focused, with briary, roasted flavors of earthy berry and chocolate. Finishes with toasty oak flavors, chocolate and herbs along with heat and spice. Fine Estates From Spain. —M.S.  
**abv:** 14% **Price:** \$16

**88 Sierra Cantabria 2009 Rioja.** A bit smoky and heavy on first take, with hickory and leather to go with black fruit aromas. The palate has a solid, weighty feel and savory, smoky flavors of roasted berry, oak and plum. Mild on the finish except for leftover campfire notes. Fine Estates From Spain. *Best Buy.* —M.S.  
**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$12

**87 Berberana 2006 Viña Alarde Reserva (Rioja).** Clearly a classic Rioja with its oak spice, tobacco and dried currant aromas. Fresh and crisp on the palate, with citrusy, almost cutting red fruit flavors and dry spice galore. Light and cleansing on the finish. Drink now through 2014. MHW, Ltd. —M.S.  
**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$15

**87 Bodegas Bilbainas 2007 Viña Pomal Crianza (Rioja).** Sweet, jammy berry aromas are a nice opening. The wine is tight in the mouth, with smacking tannins that draw down red berry and herbal flavors. For the most part this is a complete, standard

type of Rioja with juiciness and crisp acidity. Avenit Brands, Inc. —M.S.

**abv:** 14% **Price:** \$15

**87 Bodegas Faustino 2009 Faustino VII (Rioja).** Dusty up front, with leather, red plum and berry aromas. Focused and snappy in the mouth, with forward cherry and plum flavors. Finishes toasty and peppery, and overall this is a juicy wine with crispness, good fruit and spice. Palm Bay International. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

**abv:** 13% **Price:** \$11

**87 Casa de la Reina 2005 Reserva Tempranillo (Rioja).** Earthy on first take, with baked berry and raisiny aromas. Comes across fresh in the mouth, with cleansing, almost citrusy acidity giving a jolt to roasted berry, tobacco and orange peel flavors. Earthy, dry and long on the finish. Vision Wine & Spirits. —M.S.

**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$16

**87 CVNE 2007 Viña Real Plata Crianza (Rioja).** A touch murky and leafy at first, with vanilla and red fruit aromas. Runs crisp and tangy, with length, a lean structure and snappy pie cherry, red plum and vanilla flavors. Fresh and tight on the finish, with leftover juiciness. A good wine for tapas and basic salty foods. Europvin. —M.S.

**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$18

**87 El Circulo 2006 Reserva (Rioja).** Dark in color, with buttery oak, dill, coconut and leathery aromas. Tilts toward modern with its full and earthy palate feel, but there's also a lot of red fruit on the flavor package. Darkens on the finish with espresso-like bitterness. Luneau USA Inc. —M.S.

**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$NA

**87 Fernández de Piñero 2007 Crianza (Rioja).** Jammy and granular smelling at first, then charred aromas rise up and take over. The palate is round and healthy, with forward berry, plum, herb and barrel flavors. Finishes toasty and chocolaty, with drying tannins and a lot of spice flavor. Bob Bofman Selections. —M.S.

**abv:** 13% **Price:** \$20

**87 Fernández de Piñero 2004 Reserva (Rioja).** Opens with leathery aromas suggestive of animal hide along with a leafy element and nuttiness. Airing reveals a compact, medium-intensity palate with baked, roasted, fairly sweet berry flavors. Finishes sweet and mildly leafy. Bob Bofman Selections. —M.S.

**abv:** 13% **Price:** \$30

**87 Finca Nueva 2007 Crianza (Rioja).** A ripper stily for crianza, with sweet aromas of raisin, spice and mint. Fairly round and full feeling, with toasty plum and black cherry flavors that transition into mocha and cocoa on the finish. Fresh for being as dark and ripe as it is. Fine Estates From Spain. —M.S.

**abv:** 13% **Price:** \$15

**87 Lagunilla 2003 Gran Reserva (Rioja).** Baked, spicy aromas suggest root beer, lemon peel and tobacco. Feels scratchy and hollow, with leafy red fruit, citrus and cola flavors. Fits the bill for gran

reserva Rioja as it finishes toasty and warm, with sweet caramel and tobacco flavors. MHW, Ltd. —M.S.

**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$25

**87 Marques de la Concordia 2007 Signa Crianza (Rioja).** Earthy and lightly baked on the bouquet, with raspberry and plum aromas along with grassy notes and spice. The palate is medium in size and juicy, with fresh, lightly oaked berry and herbal plum flavors. Not heavy or overbearing. MHW, Ltd. —M.S.

**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$13

**87 Raiza 2007 Crianza (Rioja).** For full review see page 13. **Best Buy.**

**abv:** 14% **Price:** \$11

**86 Berberana 2009 Viña Alarde (Rioja).** Black cherry and berry jam aromas bring a touch of raisin as well. The palate is mostly fresh and zesty, with medium weight and intensity along with crisp red plum and raspberry flavors. Tight, mildly acidic and a bit toasty on the finish. MHW, Ltd. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$11

**86 Berberana 2007 Viña Alarde Crianza (Rioja).** Opens with leather, cowhide and sweet notes of raisin and licorice. The palate is a bit scratchy, with leathery red fruit flavors, oak-driven spice, bitterness and then mild heat on what amounts to a snappy but earthy finish. Improves with airing. MHW, Ltd. —M.S.

**abv:** 13% **Price:** \$13

**86 Bodegas Muriel 2009 Vendimia Selección (Rioja).** Sweet blueberry, dry wood, sawdust, vanilla and toast aromas lead to a chunky palate with jammy berry flavors accented by fairly forceful oak. Finishes similarly, with ample barrel influence, vanilla and medium length. Quintessential Wines. —M.S.

**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$15

**86 Bodegas Muriel 2008 JME Selección (Rioja).** Smoky and dark on the nose, with crusty black fruit aromas. It's short and tough in the mouth, with beaming acidity but only monoline red berry flavors. High acidity rears up again on the finish. Reflects the tough conditions of 2008. Quintessential Wines. —M.S.

**abv:** 14% **Price:** \$25

**86 Casa de la Reina 2009 Tempranillo (Rioja).** Red berry aromas carry an oaky component, and after time the bouquet settles on plum and light spice. The palate has a snappy feel and lightly oaked flavors of cherry and red plum. Easy, short and mellow on the finish. A nice quaffing Rioja at a fair price. Vision Wine & Spirits. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$10

**86 Lagunilla 2006 Reserva (Rioja).** Spice, dry oak, citrus peel, tomato and tobacco aromas all get on the board. Defines crispness and dryness with firm, one-note raspberry and cherry flavors. Any fruit fades fast on the quick finish, leaving a dry peppery flavor. MHW, Ltd. —M.S.

**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$15

**86 Montebuena 2009 Rioja.** Warm, jammy and lightly herbal smelling, with an overriding aroma of blueberry compote. Fairly full and concentrated on the palate, with herb-infused flavors of dark berry and plum. Plump, warm and chevy on what amounts to a solid finish. Kysela Père et Fils. —M.S.

**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$13

**85 Bodegas Riolanc 2009 Vendimia Selección (Rioja).** Grainy and leathery smelling, with medicinal plum and raspberry aromas. Perky but angular in the mouth, with freshening acidity leading to light but zesty strawberry and raspberry flavors. Shows drying tannins, vanilla and spice on the back end. Beacon Wine Company. —M.S.

**abv:** 13% **Price:** \$14

**85 J. Garcia Carrion 2005 Antaño Reserva (Rioja).** A bit pruney and reduced on the bouquet, with lively acidity pushing traditional Rioja flavors of roasted berry, vanilla and cocoa powder. Falls off a bit on the finish, leaving buttery oak and milk chocolate flavors. CIV/USA. —M.S.

**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$12

**85 Marques de Griñon 2009 Alea Tempranillo (Rioja).** Rubber and leather aromas create a slightly mulchy bouquet. The palate is snappy and acidic, with earthy, leafy red-fruit flavors. Finishes dry with crisp acidity and a touch of oak-related vanilla. Standard fare. MHW, Ltd. —M.S.

**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$11

**85 Rivarey 2007 Crianza (Rioja).** Crisp cherry and plum aromas come with a touch of brine. The palate is tight and fresh, with straightforward red fruit flavors in front of a fast-fading finish. Good and quaffable. Vineyard Brands. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

**abv:** 13% **Price:** \$8

**84 Bodegas la Aldea 2009 La Radela (Rioja).** Rubber and mildly roasted berry and plum aromas come with a hint of latex and bramble. The palate is regular in feel, with dilute, lightly grassy flavors of plum and cherry. Finishes light and fresh, with a touch of strawberry. Casa Ventura Imports. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

**abv:** 12.5% **Price:** \$8

**84 Darien 2007 Crianza (Rioja).** Hard and tough to penetrate on the nose. The palate is crisp and a bit raw in feel, with narrow, dry plum and berry flavors. Finishes with buttery tasting oak and a crisp, acidic fade-away. Signature Imports. —M.S.

**abv:** 14% **Price:** \$18

**84 Marqués de Elciego 2008 Selección (Rioja).** Concentrated and smoky, with shoe polish and other black aromas. It's ultratight in the mouth, collapsing on itself more than expanding. Flavors of earth and berry are loud. Rugged feeling on the finish. Quintessential Wines. —M.S.

**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$24

**83 Sancho Barón 2008 Rioja.** Wide aromas suggest earth and compost, rubber, strawberry and green. It's got the size and hits hard, but the flavors

are a bit too leafy and green. Toasty and oaky on the finish. Frontier Wine Imports. —M.S.

**abv:** 14% **Price:** \$32

**82 Altanza 2009 Edulis (Rioja).** Funky at first, with an almost fishy element to the bouquet that doesn't qualify as pleasant. Heavy and cloying on the palate, with medicinal, syrupy flavors and a heavy wash of faux oak. Candied and foxy on the finish. Imported by USA Wine West, LLC. Mara Farrell Communications. —M.S.

**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$13

**81 DSG Vineyards 2008 Phincalali (Rioja).** Grapy and pinched on the nose, jammy smelling and unconvincing. Supernarrow in the mouth, tannic, lemony and sucks the life out of your cheeks and palate. And that's not even mentioning the price. Ole Imports. —M.S.

**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$75

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## NAVARRA

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**88 Ochoa 2009 Tempranillo-Garnacha (Navarra).** Dark, dense and nice on the nose, with aromas of dried cheese, blackberry and plum. Fresh, juicy and healthy in the mouth, with blackberry and plum flavors that run long and clean. Freshness and juicy clarity are this wine's chief attributes. Frontier Wine Imports. —M.S.

**abv:** 13% **Price:** \$14

**88 Pasolasmonjas 2008 Garnacha (Navarra).** Savory and exotic on the nose, with blueberry and cardamom. The palate strikes hard with tannic clamp and reduction. Flavors run lemony and herbal, with star anise and cardamom mixing with berry fruit. Clacky and tight on the finish, but serious and complex. 350 cases made; drink now through 2012. Ole Imports. —M.S.

**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$28

**86 Vega Sindoa 2009 El Chaparral de Vega Sindoa Old Vines Garnacha (Navarra).** Starts out with scratchy, dusty, red fruit aromas. The first impression in the mouth is of shrill acidity, but as it evolves and expands that acidity helps prop up cherry and red plum flavors. Cleansing and crisp on the finish, with structure and zest. Fine Estates From Spain. —M.S.

**abv:** 14% **Price:** \$14

**85 Castillo de Monjardin 2009 La Cantera Garnacha (Navarra).** A touch stemmy on the nose, with herbal aromas and a hint of brine. Round on the palate, with a good mouthfeel and herbal berry flavors. Shows bounce and heat on the finish, but also a final note of green. Winebow. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$9

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## RIBERA DEL DUERO

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**94 O. Fournier 2006 Alfa Spiga (Ribera del Duero).** A fine and intricate heavyweight that blends power and ripeness with complexity and class. Quality leather, spice, toast and dark berry aromas set up a structured, grippy palate with generous black fruit

flavors, tobacco notes and chewy tannins. Long, sweet and rewarding on the finish. Drink now through 2016. Fine Estates From Spain. **Editors' Choice.** —M.S.

**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$47

**91 Matarromera 2005 Prestigio (Ribera del Duero).** Deep and dark, with cola, blackberry and mossy aromas. This is full-bodied, tight and tannic, with hardness that will only be tempered by food and/or more time in bottle. Tastes bold, chunky and ripe, with chocolate and licorice along with heat and tannic fire. Drink now through 2017. Matarromera USA, Inc. **Cel-lar Selection.** —M.S.

**abv:** 14% **Price:** \$70

**90 Arrocal 2009 Ribera del Duero.** Tight, focused and crisp on the nose, with clean berry and spice aromas. About as good and healthy on the palate as Ribera gets, with wild berry and correct tannin-acid balance. Toasty and peppery on the finish. A well-made, stylish wine done right. Grapes of Spain. —M.S.

**abv:** 14% **Price:** \$19

**90 Bodegas La Horra 2009 Corimbo (Ribera del Duero).** A big, modern, lusty style with dark aromas of cola, chocolate, licorice and immense berry fruit. The palate hits with a wall of tannins, but there's also full-flavored blasts of blackberry, fudge, espresso and licorice. Finishes in form: it's blackened and toasty. Kobrand. —M.S.

**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$38

**90 Matarromera 2005 Reserva (Ribera del Duero).** Cedar, cigar box and earth notes blend with ripe berry aromas to give a subtle, charming bouquet. Rich and full-bodied, with roasted berry, chocolate and coffee flavors. Finishes dark and sweet, with chunky ripeness all the way to the end. Drink now through 2013. Matarromera USA, Inc. —M.S.

**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$48

**90 Rento 2005 Ribera del Duero.** Sweet aromas of raisin, marzipan, cassis and blackberry blend with notes of licorice and vanilla to form a pretty nose. The palate is full and lush, with power and bold berry and sweet spice flavors. Chocolatey and soft on the finish. Drink now through 2013. Matarromera USA, Inc. —M.S.

**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$80

**90 Vizcarra 2008 JC (Ribera del Duero).** Meaty and dense aromas of black fruits, earth and leather are subtle and interesting. Layered and smooth on the palate, with deep berry and plum flavors offset by herbal leanings and vanilla. Slightly oaky on the finish, with length and liveliness. Drink now through 2014. Ole Imports. —M.S.

**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$24

**89 Matarromera 2009 Melior (Ribera del Duero).** Big and dark, with firm black cherry and blackberry aromas. Offers size, structure and crispness in the mouth, with driving, muscled flavors of cherry, black plum and integrated oak. Spicy and dry on the back end, with more than a hint of vanilla. Matarromera USA, Inc. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$14

**89 Mibal 2008 Ribera del Duero.** Big berry aromas are matched by creamy oak, floral and herbal notes. Clamps down in the mouth due to hard tannins, but at the same time it's deep and meaty, with moss and black fruit flavors. Long, earthy and tough on the finish. Drink now through 2014. Ole Imports. —M.S.

**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$23

**88 Alonso del Yerro 2008 Ribera del Duero.** Full, beefy and leathery smelling, with muscular black fruit aromas resting below the surface. Integrated and layered on the palate, with earthy flavors of roasted berry and leather. Turns tight and tough on the finish, where tannic bite offsets oaky chocolate and vanilla notes. Drink now through 2013. Fine Estates From Spain. —M.S.

**abv:** 14% **Price:** \$29

**88 Emina 2005 Atio (Ribera del Duero).** Ultradark and sweet, with black coffee, shoe polish and blackened berry aromas that are highly oak influenced. The palate is saturated, clumpy and aggressive, with blackened berry, lemony oak and mint flavors. Grabby and tannic in the mouth, but generous. Matarromera USA, Inc. —M.S.

**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$50

**88 Martín Berdugo 2009 Barrica (Ribera del Duero).** Clean and penetrating on the nose, with leather and warm berry/cherry aromas. Comes across bright and lively, with good balance and an appealing, easygoing set of wild berry and spice flavors. Shows length and follow-through on the finish. Very good for affordable RDD. Puerto Viejo Wines. —M.S.

**abv:** 14% **Price:** \$16

**88 Protos 2009 Tinto Fino (Ribera del Duero).** Dry, minty oak aromas mix well with snappy plum and vanilla to form a proper, pleasing bouquet. The palate is fresh, vibrant and houses sweet, slightly spicy plum and berry flavors. Same on the finish, which is correct, spicy and dry. Winebow. —M.S.

**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$17

**88 Recoletas 2005 Valdecampaña Crianza (Ribera del Duero).** Smells mature and slightly baked, with granular, sweet, raisiny core aromas. The palate is full in size and smooth in feel, with ripe berry flavors fading to raisin and prune on the back palate and finish. Chunky, flavorful and ready to drink now. Classic Wines, Inc. —M.S.

**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$16

**88 Vecordia 2009 Roble (Ribera del Duero).** A generous example of young Ribera. Dark mint, cola and blackberry aromas get more herbal with airing. The palate is secure and tannic, with ripe blackberry and sweet Bing cherry flavors. Chocolatey and tannic on the finish. Saranty Imports. —M.S.

**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$16

**88 Viña Mayor 2005 Reserva (Ribera del Duero).** A bit roasted and reedy smelling, with a hint of stem and grass mixed with berry and leather. The palate is full and feels creamy, with mildly roasted black fruit and leathery flavors. Good on the finish as



## **BUYING**guide

the wine picks up steam and clarity with airing. HAB North America. —M.S.

**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$25

**88 Viña Mayor 2005 Secreto Reserva (Ribera del Duero).** Licorice, tobacco and berry aromas lead to a crisp and zesty palate that is led by acidity and tastes of red plum, apple skins and raspberry. Tight and mildly astringent on the finish, with snap out the door. Drink now. HAB North America. —M.S.

**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$30

**87 Bodega San Pedro Regalado 2009 Embocadero Tempranillo (Ribera del Duero).** Young and fully toasted, with exuberance melled by mossy leather aromas. Full-on in the mouth, with piercing tannins in front of a chocolaty, rich palate that's herbal and offers oaky vanilla for sweetness. Turns more herbal and savage on the finish. Frontier Wine Imports. —M.S.

**abv:** 14% **Price:** \$36

**87 Bodegas Gormaz 2010 Viña Gormaz (Ribera del Duero).** Dark and a touch rubbery smelling, but overall it's straightforward. Fresh, lively and lifted on the palate, with sweet, mildly candied plum and blackberry flavors. Nice for a regular wine because it doesn't overreach. Super easy to drink. Classical Wines. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

**abv:** 14% **Price:** \$12

**87 Dolmo 2009 Vendimia Seleccionada (Ribera del Duero).** For full review see page 13.

**Best Buy.**

**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$10

**87 Mibal 2009 Tinto (Ribera del Duero).** Opens with jumpy, punchy plum and black cherry aromas that seem a touch candied. It's big, grabby and tannic on the palate, with sweet plum, blackberry and foxy flavors. Grapey, thick and loaded with fruit. Ole Imports. —M.S.

**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$14

**87 O. Fournier 2008 Spiga Red Wine (Ribera del Duero).** Tight and gritty on the bouquet, with licorice and herbal aromas. Comes across hard and tannic in the mouth, with blackberry and herbal flavors. Tannic like nails on the finish, with lemony oak notes. Fine Estates From Spain. —M.S.

**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$31

**86 Catania 2009 Ribera del Duero.** Dry, spicy and dusty on the nose, with red plum and cherry aromas that become more raisiny with airing. The palate is chewy and thick, with baked plum, blackberry and medicinal flavors. Finishes medicinal as well, with a peppery accent and lasting sweetness. Beacon Wine Company. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

**abv:** NA **Price:** \$11

**86 Legaris 2008 Crianza (Ribera del Duero).** Dark fruits, leather, compost and burnt aromas blend together on the nose. The palate is tannic and gritty feeling, while black fruit and herbal flavors lead to a narrow, mildly bitter finish containing chocolate and

coffee. Solid but hard and herbal. Aveniù Brands, Inc. —M.S.

**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$27

**86 Prado Rey 2009 Roble (Ribera del Duero).** Rubbery, spicy aromas blend with warm plum and leather scents. The palate is full but soft in texture, with jammy, sweet, lightly baked berry flavors. Stays cushioned and tasty through the finish, but peters out in flat fashion. Monsieur Touton Selection Ltd. —M.S.

**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$13

**85 Cepa 21 2008 C21 (Ribera del Duero).** Heavily oaked, with strong aromas of hickory, vanilla, mint and lacquer along with black cherry. Like most '08s from RDD, this wine is clipped and tough in the mouth, with lemon, toast and herbal berry flavors. Toasty and blackened on the finish. Fine Estates From Spain. —M.S.

**abv:** 14% **Price:** \$25

**85 Protos 2008 Crianza (Ribera del Duero).** Cola, charcoal and other dark aromas run heavy on the leathery, somewhat cheesy bouquet. Feels sheer and grabby, with a lot of oak and clacky blackberry and plum flavors. Narrows down significantly on the finish. A tight and tough version of Ribera del Duero. Winebow. —M.S.

**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$30

**85 Valdubón 2009 Ribera del Duero.** Cherry and spice aromas are fairly oaky and resinous. The palate is also resinous, with drying wood tannins along with clove and generic berry and cherry flavors. Tastes peppery and also like a clove-infused barrel on the finish. Freixenet USA. —M.S.

**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$15

**85 Viña Mayor 2009 Tinto Roble (Ribera del Duero).** Dry spice and wild herb aromas are prickly and blend into larger plum notes. The palate is snappy and choppy, with oaky cream, berry and spice flavors. Finishes dry and woody, with mild tannic bite. Good but regular. HAB North America. —M.S.

**abv:** 13% **Price:** \$13

**84 Condado de Oriza 2008 Crianza (Ribera del Duero).** Sharp and briney on the nose, with a lot of wood. Feels tannic, hard and grating, with herbal berry and licorice flavors. Dries out fast on the finish, with a woody, resinous aftertaste. A miserly wine from a difficult vintage. Luneau USA Inc. —M.S.

**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$14

**84 Torres 2008 Celeste Crianza (Ribera del Duero).** Charred and rubbery smelling, with superficial oak sitting on top of the bouquet. Feels rough and tannic on the palate, with herbal, leafy, peppery core flavors and a whack of lemony oak. Comes around with airing but reflects the poor quality of the 2008 vintage. Dreyfus, Ashby & Co. —M.S.

**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$28

## TORO

**95 François Lurton 2006 Campo Eliseo (Toro).** Everything that's fantastic about 21st-century Toro is encapsulated in this big, intense beauty. Tobacco, vanilla and blackberry aromas grace the forceful but stylish nose, while the palate pulses with toasty blackberry, dark plum, tobacco and chocolaty flavors. Smoky, pure and long on the finish. A hands-down winner to drink now through 2016. Winesellers Ltd. **Editors' Choice.** —M.S.

**abv:** 15.5% **Price:** \$100

**92 Muruve 2007 Elite (Toro).** A little bit rooty initially, with coconut, sandalwood, lemon peel and mocha aromas. It's pure and solid in the mouth, with cola, blackberry, fudge, mocha and espresso flavors. Power and style are on full display as this Tinta de Toro finishes with black licorice, vanilla and toasty flavors. Best now through 2013. United Cellars, Inc. —M.S.

**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$37

**92 Pintia 2006 Toro.** A big, modern-style contender with burly berry, lemon, coconut, dill and blackberry on the bouquet. Lush and cushioned in the mouth, with meaty, dark flavors of roasted blackberry, espresso and fudge. Chewy and dense on the finale, but not overly hard or tannic. Drink now through 2015. Europvin. —M.S.

**abv:** 15% **Price:** \$72

**91 Cyan 2005 Prestigio (Toro).** Rich, dark and full on the bouquet, with sturdy black fruit aromas. The palate is round and tough, but done right. Flavors of chocolate, blackberry and prune run deep, while the finish is full of power and confirming ripe black fruit flavors. Drink now through 2014. Matarronera USA, Inc. —M.S.

**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$32

**90 Abelis Carthago 2007 Fighting Bulls Crianza (Toro).** Dark, tight and charred on the nose, with intense berry aromas. The palate is quite juicy and acidic for Toro, with potent black fruit and cocoa flavors. The wine's primed acidity lasts onto the finish, creating length and raciness but also some grittiness. Drink now through 2014. Classic Wines, Inc. —M.S.

**abv:** 15% **Price:** \$48

## VALENCIA

**90 El Molet 2009 Red (Valencia).** Sweet blackberry aromas come with floral edgings, and the whole is impressive. Full-bodied and balanced, with healthy, ripe black cherry and dark plum flavors. Finishes spicy, with a note of bitter espresso. 90% Tempranillo with 10% Cabernet Sauvignon. One of the best wines from Valencia. Grapes of Spain. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

**abv:** 14.5% **Price:** \$15

**88 Casa L'Angel 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon (Valencia).** Round, sweet and ripe smelling, then tight and rubbery in the mouth, with full tannins that smack down with force. The palate is medium in depth, with dark plum and berry flavors in front of a

sweet, molasses-tinged finish. Very good for affordable Spanish Cabernet. Grapes of Spain. **Best Buy.** —M.S.  
abv: 14.5% Price: \$13

**88 Sequiot 2008 Tempranillo-Cabernet Sauvignon (Valencia).** Smells like spiced fruit cake, prune and licorice. It's ripe and a touch syrupy, but genuine and not cloying or overly heavy. Tastes of baked plum and blackberry along with dark spices and chocolate. Chocolate and coffee-tinged on the finish. 50% Tempranillo and 50% CS. Classic Wines, Inc. **Best Buy.** —M.S.  
abv: 14.5% Price: \$10

**82 Radio Boca 2008 Tempranillo (Valencia).** Starts out "smoky" but quickly degenerates toward murky and stemmy smelling. The palate has a bland feel along with roasted, leafy, dried-out flavors of raspberry and earthy plum. Not a prime-time wine. Regency Wine Group. —M.S.  
abv: 13% Price: \$8

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## PRIORAT

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**91 Clos Figueras 2009 Serras del Priorat (Priorat).** Opens with roasted, rubbery aromas that transition to meaty and leathery. Full-bodied in every way, with warmth, sweetness and lots of chocolate, brown sugar and cola vying with very ripe black fruit flavors. Finishes sweet and rich, with power. Europvin. —M.S.  
abv: 14.5% Price: \$28

**90 Torres 2009 Salmos (Priorat).** Roasted, meaty and leathery on the nose, with some schisty mineral poking through. Saturated and thick in the middle, with blackberry, chocolate and a bit of buttery oak flavor. Sweet and chocolaty on the finish, with plenty of extraction. Dreyfus, Ashby & Co. —M.S.  
abv: 15% Price: \$40

**89 Casa Gran del Siurana 2009 GR-174 (Priorat).** Rubbery and smoky to start, with standard berry aromas and leather filling in any blanks. Thick and solid in the mouth, with intense, almost baked blackberry, licorice and toast flavors leading to a toasty, warm finish with chocolate and coffee. Very good for under \$20. MHW, Ltd. —M.S.  
abv: 15% Price: \$17

**88 Genium Celler 2009 Fresc (Priorat).** Concentrated and strong on the bouquet, with grit, leather, heat and bold berry aromas. Choppy tannins give the palate a hard feel, while the flavor profile runs warm, baked and sweet, with plum and berry fruit thrown in. Good but a little hard and hot. Just 450 cases made. Grapes of Spain. —M.S.  
abv: 15% Price: \$32

**88 Nita 2009 Red (Priorat).** Minty and prickly on first take, with plum, herbs and jamminess to the nose. The palate is good but basic, with juicy acids, firm tannins and candied flavors of berry fruits. Finishes sweet and consistent, with a youthful, almost juvenile character. Folio Fine Wine Partners. —M.S.  
abv: 14.5% Price: \$25

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## CAMPO DE BORJA

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**94 Alto Moncayo 2008 Aquilon Garnacha (Campo de Borja).** For full review see page 3. **Editors' Choice.**  
abv: 16% Price: \$166

**93 Alto Moncayo 2008 Garnacha (Campo de Borja).** For full review see page 4. **Editors' Choice.**  
abv: 16% Price: \$47

**92 Alto Moncayo 2008 Veraton Garnacha (Campo de Borja).** For full review see page 5.  
abv: 15.5% Price: \$29

**89 Borsao 2009 Tres Picos Garnacha (Campo de Borja).** Heavy doses of char, rubber, graphite and hickory dance with black fruit aromas. Tastes big, rich, resinous and lemony, with a ton of barrel action forcing up chocolate, resin and dark spice flavors. Warm and long on the finish, with power to spare. 100% Garnacha. Fine Estates From Spain. —M.S.  
abv: 14.5% Price: \$17

**88 Pagos del Moncayo 2009 Garnacha (Campo de Borja).** For full review see page 10.  
abv: 14.5% Price: \$15

**86 Coto de Hayas 2007 Fagus Garnacha (Campo de Borja).** An unusual and exotic bouquet is the greeting; it smells like Middle Eastern spice, blueberry and cinnamon. Rums a bit flat and syrupy in the mouth, with raisin, stewed plum and spicy flavors. Fig and carob flavors define the finish, which is thick and soft. Scoperta Importing Co. Inc. —M.S.  
abv: 13.5% Price: \$20

**86 Pagos del Moncayo 2010 Garnacha-Syrah (Campo de Borja).** Floral red berry aromas vie with red licorice and raspberry candy scents on what is basically a sweet-smelling nose. Fairly dense and concentrated in the mouth, but narrow, with cherry and berry flavors. Finishes medicinal and slightly herbal. Axial Wines USA. —M.S.  
abv: 13.5% Price: \$15

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## CATALUNYA

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**87 Torres 2008 Gran Sangre de Toro Reserva (Catalunya).** Mint, herbs, tree bark and plum aromas settle fairly well. The mouthfeel is solid and full, setting the stage for dark berry, vanilla and rooty flavors. Transitions to mocha and coffee on the finish. A blend of Garnacha, Carignan and Syrah. Dreyfus, Ashby & Co. —M.S.  
abv: 14% Price: \$17

**86 Torres 2009 Sangre de Toro (Catalunya).** A bit minty and sharp on the bouquet, with a tight, angular palate featuring red plum, spice and cherry flavors. Juicy, bright, active and zesty, with some scour to the finish. Gets better as it breathes. Dreyfus, Ashby & Co. —M.S.  
abv: 13.5% Price: \$12

**86 Torres 2008 Coronas Tempranillo (Catalunya).** Dry, scratchy and rooty smelling, with balsam wood and earthy berry aromas. Medium-bodied, with gritty tannins, herb and spice flavors, and basic but solid cherry and berry fruit. A touch oaky and hot on the finish. Dreyfus, Ashby & Co. —M.S.  
abv: 13.5% Price: \$13

**85 Torres 2008 Sangre de Toro Tempranillo (Catalunya).** Pointy and sharp at first, with earthy, dry aromas. Edgy feeling, with heat and scour to go with peppery, herbal berry flavors. Finishes mossy and warm, with a minty burn. Improves with airing. Dreyfus, Ashby & Co. —M.S.  
abv: 13.5% Price: \$12

**84 René Barbier NV Mediterranean Red Tempranillo-Merlot (Catalunya).** For full review see page 14. **Best Buy.**  
abv: 13.5% Price: \$6

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## EMPORDA

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**86 Celler Arché Pagès 2005 Sàtirs Negre (Emporda).** Starts with rubbery, flat berry aromas but rounds out with air. It's tight and rocking with tannins as dark fruit flavors take control. Shows weight and darkness on the finish. Grenache, Carignan and Cabernet Sauvignon. Luxe Vintages. —M.S.  
abv: 14% Price: \$18

**83 Castillo de Perelada 2005 5 Finca Reserva (Emporda).** An oddball blend of many grapes that offers a spicy oak cover and sweet, earthy notes from front to back. But it's hard as nails, with blazing acidity, the result of which is a clacky, rough wine. On the plus side it has interesting flavors with tobacco and citrus notes. MHW, Ltd. —M.S.  
abv: 14% Price: \$19

**82 Celler Arché Pagès 2005 Cartesius (Emporda).** Smacky and hard right away, with compact black cherry aromas. Shows lots of gusto in the mouth but no elegance or touch. Tastes short and condensed, a blah mix of red berry and burnt candy. Luxe Vintages. —M.S.  
abv: 14.5% Price: \$26

**81 Oliver Conti 2005 Red (Emporda).** Disappointing given the price and how good Conti's white wines can be. This is leafy and piercing on the nose, then heavy and super tannic and growling on the palate. Tastes leafy, herbal and earthy. Winebow. —M.S.  
abv: 13.5% Price: \$45

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## TIERRA DE CASTILLA

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**90 Mano A Mano 2008 Venta la Ossa Syrah (Vino de la Tierra de Castilla).** A smoky, dark and deep Syrah from the La Mancha region of central Spain. It's a warm-weather wine with rich, ripe, saturated fruit and sweet accents of coconut, chocolate and vanilla to go with core blackberry flavors. Lush and oaky, with a creamy thickness to the finish. Aviva Vino. —M.S.  
abv: 14% Price: \$20

**89 Casa del Valle 2006 Hacienda Shiraz (Vino de la Tierra de Castilla).** Dense and reduced initially, this Syrah from the Toledo area delivers fresh raisin on the nose and then a solid, rugged palate with saturated plum, berry and mild herbal notes. It's thick, ripe, healthy and balanced, all leading to a fine final product. Drink now. Classic Wines, Inc. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

abv: 14% Price: \$14

**87 Finca Constançia 2008 Red (Vino de la Tierra de Castilla).** Fairly herbal and brushy on the nose, but good in the mouth, with firm tannins supporting herbal black fruit flavors that fold in chocolate and spice. Comes around as it airs, with tobacco and baking spices working the finish. A green-leaning blend of six grapes led by Syrah and Cabernet Sauvignon. San Francisco Wine Exchange. —M.S.

abv: 14% Price: \$21

**83 Dehesa de Luna 2008 Red (Vino de la Tierra de Castilla).** Prickly aromas of vinegar, pickled rhubarb and bramble don't exactly roll out the red carpet. The palate has a decent feel, but it's thick and borderline cloying. Tastes both green and sweet, with creamy vanilla and carob flavors. Burnt tasting on the finish. Las Arribes LLC. —M.S.

abv: 14.5% Price: \$18

## OTHER RED WINES

**92 Aldeasoña 2005 Tinto del País (Vino de la Tierra de Castilla y León).** Slightly charred on the nose, with blackberry, licorice and tobacco for key aromas. A serious Tempranillo with ripe, deep flavors of berry, chocolate, mocha and spice all supported by a bed of tight, strong-boned tannins. Dark as they come; drink now through 2016. Winebow. —M.S.

abv: 14.5% Price: \$90

**92 Viñas del Cenit 2005 Cenit VDC Old Vines Tempranillo (Tierra del Viños de Zamora).** Few wines of this quality come from Zamora, and if you like top-flight Ribera del Duero or Toro reds then give this heavyweight a try. It's packed with earthy blackberry and licorice aromas that fall in front of a saturated palate sporting cola, berry syrup, chocolate and coffee flavors. Sweet and oaky on the finish. Drink now through 2014. Aviva Vino. **Editors' Choice.** —M.S.

abv: 15% Price: \$115

**89 Castell del Remei 2007 Oda (Costers del Segre).** Sweet, lightly baked, leathery and raisiny on the nose, then lush, saturated and still balanced in the mouth. Delivers tasty earth, leather, herb and baked berry and plum flavors in front of a toasty, chocolatey finish. Richer and more chewy than Remei's Gotim Bru blend. Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon and Tempranillo. Baron Francois Ltd. —M.S.

abv: 14.5% Price: \$27

**88 Bodega Otto Bestué 2008 Finca Rable-ros Tempranillo-Cabernet Sauvignon (Somontano).** Gets going with earthy, mildly baked aromas of cherry and chocolate-covered raisin. It's fresh and jumpy in the mouth, with berry, plum, chocolate and an herbal undercurrent. Feels good throughout,

with some heat and herbal character to the finish. Axial Wines USA. —M.S.

abv: 13.5% Price: \$15

**88 Museum 2005 Real Reserva (Cigales).** Spunky up front, with lighter-framed cherry, raspberry and graphite scents as well as a touch of grassy green. The palate is firm and certainly not soft, with lightly herbal red berry, mocha and tobacco flavors. Both sweet and spicy on a crisp, acid-driven finish. Drink now. Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd. —M.S.

abv: 14% Price: \$30

**87 Bodega Otto Bestué 2008 Finca Santa Sabina Cabernet Sauvignon-Tempranillo (Somontano).** A bit warm, leathery and cheesy at first, but better as it settles. Shows crisp acidity and cut, which livens up earthy cherry and plum flavors and balances out any weight and resinous oak you might find. Hints at class by delivering freshness and nothing too heavy. Axial Wines USA. —M.S.

abv: 14% Price: \$19

**87 Castell del Remei 2008 Gotim Bru (Costers del Segre).** A touch flat and leathery on the nose, but it picks up steam as it moves along. The palate is full and thick, with baked berry, cherry, earth and syrup flavors. Offers just enough crisp acidity to keep it balanced, then finishes warm and sweet. Baron Francois Ltd. —M.S.

abv: 14% Price: \$16

**85 Marques de la Concordia 2007 Durius Natural Reserve Syrah (Vino de la Tierra de Castilla y León).** The first aromas suggest tomato leaf and tobacco, which are followed by richer, more syrupy raisin and cassis. The palate holds onto that heavy character, giving raisin, prune and tobacco flavors. Steady and sweet as a whole. MHW, Ltd. —M.S.

abv: 14.5% Price: \$20

## ROSÉ

**85 Dominio de Eguren 2010 Protocolo Rosé (Vino de la Tierra de Castilla).** Tight aromas of citrus and red fruits aren't expressive but at least they're crisp. Same goes for the palate, which is tight and juicy as it offers flavors of pink grapefruit, citrus and burnt grass/hay. Good as value-priced quaffers go. Fine Estates From Spain. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

abv: 13% Price: \$7

**83 Coto de Hayas 2010 Garnacha Cabernet Rosé (Campo de Borja).** A full-out charge of vanilla aromas is strange for a rosé, but that's what you get along with cherry candy notes. The palate is full and chunky, with stinky berry fruit flavors. Acidity is the wine's saving grace; it keeps things moving. Scoperta Importing Co. Inc. —M.S.

abv: 13.5% Price: \$8

**82 Avanthia 2010 Rosé (Valdeorras).** Red in color, with a cidery, chunky bouquet that doesn't even hint at how sweet this wine is. Expect candied, sugary red fruit flavors that suggest American

White Zin and Boston Baked Beans candy. Fine Estates From Spain. —M.S.

abv: 13.5% Price: \$20

**81 Bodegas Iranzo 2010 Vertus Spanish Rosé Bobal Wine Made with Organically Grown Grapes (Utiel-Requena).** Heavy plum, bubblegum and wheat grass aromas are less than convincing. The palate offers sour cherry and plum skin flavors along with cleansing, sharp acids. Tart and citric. Natural Merchants LLC. —M.S.

abv: 12.5% Price: \$9

**80 Bodegas Valdemar 2010 Conde de Valdemar Rosado (Rioja).** Maderized and stalky smelling, with a scratchy palate and grassy, pickled flavors that lean toward strawberry and raspberry. CIV/USA. —M.S.

abv: 14% Price: \$10

## SPANISH WHITES

### RÍAS BAIXAS

**89 Valtea 2010 Albariño (Rías Baixas).** Lemon smelling but otherwise straightforward, with citrus blossom and apple aromas. Seems just creamy enough in the mouth, with mild citrusy acidity and normal, likable flavors of apple and orange. Uncomplicated, clean and ready to drink. Luxe Vintages. —M.S.

abv: 12.5% Price: \$20

**89 Vionta 2010 Limited Release Albariño (Rías Baixas).** For full review see page 10.

abv: 13% Price: \$15

**85 Con un Par 2010 Albariño (Rías Baixas).** Citrus peel and slightly maderized peach aromas could use more zest and edge but are still decent. Sort of chunky on the palate, with slightly dull flavors of white fruits. Pithy on the finish; fights to maintain core freshness. Vicente Gandia PLA. —M.S.

abv: 13.5% Price: \$15

### RIBEIRO

**89 Coto de Gomariz 2009 Colleita Seleccionada (Ribeiro).** Gold in color and loaded with heavily toasted, resinous barrel aromas. The palate is lush and Burgundian, with lemon, baked apple, woodspice and white pepper flavors. Toasty and well structured for a barrel-fermented Spanish white. P.R. Grisley Company. —M.S.

abv: 13.5% Price: \$35

**88 Viña Costeira 2010 White (Ribeiro).** This is a perennial winner among well-priced Spanish whites. The nose is clean, light and suggests apple blossom and buttercup. The palate has a good, tight, regular feel and honest flavors of green fruits and melon. Pleasant at every checkpoint. Spain Wine Collection. —M.S.

abv: 11.5% Price: \$15

**87 Coto de Gomariz 2010 Blanco (Ribeiro).** A little wheaty and bready on the nose, with



mild pear accents. The palate is round, simple and slightly oily in texture, with peach and melon flavors. Finishes solid, with white pepper notes and pith. P.R. Grisley Company. —M.S.  
**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$25

**87 Coto de Gomariz 2010 X Albariño (Ribeiro).** This 100% Albariño from Ribeiro shows light orange blossom aromas. It's chunky and almost chewy, with lightly pithy citrus flavors and roundness to the palate. Finishes a touch pithy and bitter, with white pepper notes. May already be starting to fade; drink right away. P.R. Grisley Company. —M.S.  
**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$28

## RIOJA

**84 J. Garcia Carrion 2009 Antaño Viura (Rioja).** For full review see page 14. *Best Buy.*  
**abv:** 12.5% **Price:** \$6

**83 Bodegas Valdemar 2009 Conde de Valdemar Finca Alto Cantabria Viura (Rioja).** Flat aromas include iodine, butterscotch and cider, but overall the nose isn't that lively or fresh. The palate, meanwhile, is round, soft and mealy, with oaky, barrel-fermented of buttered baked apple and resin. Proves why barrel-fermented Viura is sketchy terrain. CIV/USA. —M.S.  
**abv:** 13% **Price:** \$15

**81 Bodegas y Viñedos Noe 2010 Cuatro Viura (Rioja).** Damp, mealy aromas offer a touch of melon. The palate, however, is tart and metallic, with sour citrus flavors and a weird note of burnt popcorn on the finish. Acidity is all that's keeping it afloat. Massanois Imports. —M.S.  
**abv:** 13% **Price:** \$14

## RUEDA

**90 François Lurton 2009 Hermanos Lurton Cuesta de Oro Verdejo (Rueda).** Among barrel-fermented Verdejos from the Rueda region, this one is at the top of what is a small hierarchy. Lemon and toasty oak are the key aromas, while the palate is not whacked out with wood or resin as it offers oaky support to apple and citrus fruit. Long and focused on the finish. Winesellers Ltd. —M.S.  
**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$32

**86 Martinsancho 2010 Verdejo (Rueda).** Simple, clean, mostly neutral aromas of citrus and orange blossom lead to an acidic, minerally palate with green citrus flavors. For Verdejo this is standard and good, with grapefruit on the finish. Juicy and easy to sip. Classical Wines. —M.S.  
**abv:** 13% **Price:** \$18

**86 Nebla 2010 Vendimia Nocturna Verdejo (Rueda).** For full review see page 14. *Best Buy.*  
**abv:** 12.5% **Price:** \$9

**85 François Lurton 2010 Hermanos Lurton Verdejo (Rueda).** Chunky tropical fruit aro-

mas settle on melon and citrus. The palate is equally citrusy and easy to get, with pineapple and green apple flavors. Zesty and crisp on the back side. Winesellers Ltd. —M.S.  
**abv:** 12.5% **Price:** \$12

## VALDEORRAS

**88 Viña Godeval 2010 Godello (Valdeorras).** Neutral smelling at first, then the nose opens to display hay, grass and apple blossom aromas. The palate is tight, crisp and a bit tart, with grassy apple and lime flavors. Zesty and piercing on the finish. Fine Estates From Spain. —M.S.  
**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$18

**87 Gaba do Xil 2010 Godello (Valdeorras).** Opens with minerality, crisp fruit and sweet melon aromas. In the mouth, it's showing cut and acidity in front of sweet pear and melon flavors. Turns pithy and grassy on the finish, with applesauce and spice notes poking through. Vintus LLC. —M.S.  
**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$19

**85 Avanthia 2010 Godello (Valdeorras).** Well made for what it is: a sweet, barrel-fermented wine that tastes outright sugary. Amid the blatant sweetness there's peach pit and almond aromas, lots of barrel resin, and finally sweet, oaky mango and tropical fruit flavors. Properly made and acidic, but arguably too sweet for Godello. Fine Estates From Spain. —M.S.  
**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$30

## OTHER WHITE WINES

**89 Temps de Flors 2010 White (Penedès).** This three-grape blend of Xarello, Muscat and Gewürztraminer is floral and inviting, with melony aromas. The palate is light but has stuffing and creamy edges. Tastes flowery, with green melon, lychee, honey and clover. Smooth, tasty and different. Spain Wine Collection. *Best Buy.* —M.S.  
**abv:** 12% **Price:** \$14

**89 Txomin Etxaniz 2010 Getaria (Getariako Txakolina).** When caught fresh, this is one of the Txakoli region's best wines. It comes on hard, clacky and tight as a box of nails, with citrus and minerally aromas. The palate is crisp and tight, with apple, lime, kiwi and spritz. Long, clean and refreshing. Fine Estates From Spain. —M.S.  
**abv:** 11.5% **Price:** \$25

**88 Real Compañía de Vinos 2010 Blanco (Vino de la Tierra de Castilla).** Clean, minerally and subtle on the nose, with apple notes. The palate is crisp and honest, with normal, likable apple and citrus flavors. Just fleshy enough on the finish, with good length and acidity. Quintessential Wines. *Best Buy.* —M.S.  
**abv:** 12.5% **Price:** \$10

**88 Rezabal 2010 Hondarrabi Zuri (Getariako Txakolina).** Easy on the nose, then full of zest and spritz on the palate. Tastes like lemon-lime soda with minerality and a touch of green pepper and as-

paragus. Finishes tangy and long; very nice despite the green elements. The Artisan Collection. —M.S.  
**abv:** 11% **Price:** \$24

**87 Sumarroca 2010 Estate Bottled Dry Muscat (Penedès).** Smells like fresh-cut grass, clover, lychee and honey more than any particular fruit. The palate is zesty, well cut and spritzy, with tangy acids and flavors of honeyed melon, lychee and green citrus. Turns a touch bitter and oily on the finish. Frontier Wine Imports. —M.S.  
**abv:** 11.5% **Price:** \$16

**86 Abad Dom Bueno 2010 Godello (Bierzo).** Apple, peach and corn aromas are indicative of the chunky palate that comes next. Flavors run a touch stinky and grassy, with apple cider the key fruit component. Simple on the finish; middle of the road as a whole. Frontier Wine Imports. —M.S.  
**abv:** 13% **Price:** \$22

**86 Jorge Ordoñez & Co. 2010 Botani Moscatel Seco (Málaga).** Grassy and oily smelling and then you'll find a thick, oily palate with honey and lychee flavors. Not very zesty, so it's kind of clumsy and dense, with a chunky finish and bitterness. Decent acidity is what keeps its head above water. Fine Estates From Spain. —M.S.  
**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$19

**86 Txorierrri 2010 Uixar (Bizkaiko Txakolina).** Here's a Txakoli that's devoid of spritz and bubbles. It's a classic dry white table wine with zest and minerality along with flavors of melon, green apple and lime. Limited in scope but good if you like a tangy, tart, acid-rich white. The Artisan Collection. —M.S.  
**abv:** 12.5% **Price:** \$26

**85 Anima Negra 2010 Quíbia (Vi de la Terra Mallorca).** Peachy and waxy on the nose, with floral notes. The palate is tight, acidic and drawing, with citrus, apple and other basic flavors. Turns drier and tighter the more it airs. Finishes semibitter. A blend of Premsal and Callet, two Mallorcan grapes. Winebow. —M.S.  
**abv:** NA **Price:** \$16

**85 Pazo de Arribi 2010 Godello (Bierzo).** Round and melony, but also a bit heavy and mealy smelling, indicating that it's starting to turn. Feels chunky, with lychee, sweet citrus and pithy flavors. Adequate acidity rises up on the finish, but overall this is a chunky, ripe type of Godello that seems to be fading prematurely. Classical Wines. —M.S.  
**abv:** 12.5% **Price:** \$19

**82 Vicente Gandia 2010 Organic Verdejo (Spain).** A bit off course as Verdejo goes, with spritz to the palate and then mealy citrus and persimmon flavors. Lingers but doesn't do or say much on the finish. Not bad but it doesn't click. Vicente Gandia PLA. —M.S.  
**abv:** 12% **Price:** \$8

**80 Bodegas Virgen del Águila 2009 Seis Circles Viura-Chardonnay (Cariñena).** Floral and honeyed smelling at first, with suggestions of Moscatel. Lime and gardenia aromas settle in after-

ward, leading to a flat, bland, sweet palate with lime-like flavors. Gets worse and weaker as it airs out, ultimately ending in chaos. Patagonia Wine & Imports, LLC. —M.S.

abv: 11.5%

Price: \$8

## AUSTRIAN REDS

### BLAUFRÄNKISCH

**92 Gernot and Heike Heinrich 2009 Blaufränkisch (Leithaberg).** Heinrich's Blaufränkisch is a concentrated and deeply tannic wine. It shows a mineral texture to go with the black plums and powerful structure. Intended for long-term aging, its acidity and dry core are already promising. Keep 3–4 years. Glass stopper. Winebow. *Cellar Selection.* —R.V.

abv: 13.5%

Price: \$45

**92 Nittaus Anita und Hans 2009 Alte Reben Blaufränkisch (Leithaberg).** A hugely tannic wine, still of course very young. Its black cherry and dark plum fruits are augmented by wood tannins and concentrated spice. This is Blaufränkisch at its most dense with layered acidity and juicy fruit. Age for 4–5 years. Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd. —R.V.

abv: 13.5%

Price: \$45

**91 Prieler 2009 Blaufränkisch (Leithaberg).** Still young and still dominated by new wood, this will develop into a powerful and serious wine. All the right black fruits and acidity are there. The wine has richness and fine aging potential. Keep for 3–4 years. Michael Skurnik Wines. —R.V.

abv: 13.5%

Price: \$NA

**91 Sommer 2009 Reserve Blaufränkisch (Leithaberg).** A firm and darkly structured wine, exuding powerful tannins and dense fruit. It has weight and richness, and it is still developing. The acidity offers a juicy red fruit edge to this concentrated wine. Age for 3–4 years. Blue Danube Wine Co. *Cellar Selection.* —R.V.

abv: 13%

Price: \$27

**90 Martin Pasler 2009 Reserve Blaufränkisch (Leithaberg).** Ripe, perfumed wine, its sweet red berry fruits underpinned by firm, dry tannins. The wine is rich, full, the acidity cutting through jammy red plum flavors. Age for 2–3 years, but also drinkable now. —R.V.

abv: 13.5%

Price: \$NA

**90 Prieler 2008 Blaufränkisch (Leithaberg).** The initial impression is of black fruits, chocolate and coffee flavors. These delicious tastes are supported by structure, intense tannins and juicy acidity. Age this elegant Blaufränkisch for another two years. Michael Skurnik Wines. —R.V.

abv: NA

Price: \$NA

**90 Tinhof 2009 Blaufränkisch (Leithaberg).** A wine that feels rich, with plum and sweet cherry fruits. There is the essential core of dark tannins to go with the delicious explosion of ripe fruits. Drink

now, but better to keep for 2–3 years. Legend Company Group LLC. —R.V.

abv: 13%

Price: \$NA

**89 Paul Achs 2010 Heideboden Blaufränkisch (Burgenland).** Tannic, red fruits and a firm structure characterize a wine that offers spice and wood as a backdrop. There is power here, partnered with elegance. Winebow. —R.V.

abv: NA

Price: \$27

**89 Tinhof 2008 Blaufränkisch (Leithaberg).** A severe wine, dominated by acidity and tight tannins. There is a juicy red cherry element as well to make the wine attractive while retaining its serious side. The finish brings more berry fruit and acidity. Legend Company Group LLC. —R.V.

abv: 13%

Price: \$NA

**87 Birgit Braunstein 2009 Reserve Blaufränkisch (Leithaberg).** Dry, leathery wine, its red cherry fruit given an edge by tannins. The wine has spice, although also a more austere, dark side. It needs time to open out. Adventures In Wine. —R.V.

abv: 13.5%

Price: \$20

**87 Wachter Wiesler 2008 Steinweg Blaufränkisch (Eisenberg).** Aged in 500-liter barrels, this wine has a very mineral character, packed with spice, juicy red berry fruits, and underlying dryness. For drinking now and over the next two years. Carlo Huber Selections. —R.V.

abv: NA

Price: \$69

### OTHER RED WINES

**94 Hans Igler 2008 Ab Ericio (Burgenland).** Blaufränkisch dominates this blend with Merlot and Zweigelt. This flagship wine from the Igler winery is powered by its perfumed fruit, cherry and red berry flavors, ripe and juicy at the same time. There is no question of the ageability of this concentrated, complex wine. Magellan Wine Imports. —R.V.

abv: NA

Price: \$62

**91 Josef Pöckl 2008 Rosso e Nero (Burgenland).** A blend of Blaufränkisch, Zweigelt, Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot, created as a fusion of international and Austrian varieties, this dry-textured, firm wine is rich and full-bodied with plum skins and concentration. Age for 3–4 years. Monika Caha Selections. —R.V.

abv: NA

Price: \$40

**91 Tinhof 2007 Leithaberg Rot (Burgenland).** Showing more of the spicy side of Blaufränkisch, which dominates the blend, this is a wine that also brings out ripe tannins, juicy red fruit, acidity and a dense core of dryness. It is still young, the fruit still bursting to get out. Legend Company Group LLC. *Cellar Selection.* —R.V.

abv: 13%

Price: \$NA

**88 Bründlmayer 2008 Cécile Pinot Noir (Niederösterreich).** The top red from Bründlmayer, this has richness, spice, ripe tannins and the earthy character often found in Pinot Noir. It is not rich, rather

it's pierced with acidity, black cherry and a dark element of tannin. Age for 2–3 years. Michael Skurnik Wines. —R.V.

abv: 13%

Price: \$NA

**88 Tinhof 2006 Leithaberg Rot (Burgenland).** Tight, dark tannins and meaty flavors suggest a wine that is losing fruit, gaining maturity. There is a distinct dry side while the spice and juicy acidity act as a contrast. It is now ready to drink, great with strong meat dishes. Legend Company Group LLC. —R.V.

abv: 13%

Price: \$NA

**87 Bründlmayer 2007 Langenloiser Dechant Pinot Noir (Niederösterreich).** There is a firm, dry core to this attractively spiced wine. Black-berry fruit is fleshy, ripe, although with a considerable amount of acidity. It's a wine that is structured, finishing with chewy plum skin flavors. Michael Skurnik Wines. —R.V.

abv: 13%

Price: \$NA

**86 Bründlmayer 2008 Ladner St. Laurent (Niederösterreich).** An intensely acidic wine, its tannins and spice acting as a foil to the freshest of black currant fruit flavors. It's definitely a cool-climate red. Screwcap. Michael Skurnik Wines. —R.V.

abv: 13%

Price: \$NA

## AUSTRIAN WHITES

### GRÜNER VELTLINER

**93 Bründlmayer 2009 Kammerer Lamm Auslese Grüner Veltliner (Niederösterreich).** The term Auslese is really describing the superb richness of the wine rather than its sweetness. With warm currant and sweet pear flavors, the wine is balanced and has a burst of final acidity. Michael Skurnik Wines. —R.V.

abv: 13%

Price: \$NA

**88 Sommer 2010 Reserve Grüner Veltliner (Leithaberg).** A ripe wine, emphasizing the sweet apple and pear side of Grüner Veltliner, the acidity enveloped by rich fruits. There is a delicious freshness, with just a bite of citrus to sharpen the aftertaste. Screwcap. Blue Danube Wine Co. —R.V.

abv: 13%

Price: \$38

### CHARDONNAY

**91 Martin Pasler 2010 Reserve Chardonnay (Leithaberg).** A young, still green-fruited wine, all citrus and apples. It has weight, though, giving it a rich potential. The flavors show concentration, a mineral edge, almost steely in character. Enjoy it now for its crispness or in a year for greater roundness. —R.V.

abv: 13.5%

Price: \$NA

**88 Birgit Braunstein 2010 Reserve Chardonnay (Leithaberg).** Full of melon and pear flavors, with a good burst of acidity, this is a smooth, rounded wine, attractively fruity and ripe. There is

some structure here to give the wine extra weight. The finish shows strong wood aging. —R.V.  
**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$NA

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## OTHER DRY WHITES

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**90 Nittnaus Anita und Hans 2010 Chardonnay-Pinot Blanc (Leithaberg).** Chardonnay and Pinot Blanc is a blend once found in Burgundy, but rarely today. Here in Austrian Burgenland, it gives a very rounded style of wine, although with a terroir-marked mineral edge. Baked apples and creamed pear are laced with pink grapefruit. Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd. —R.V.  
**abv:** 13% **Price:** \$36

**88 Tinhof 2008 Leithaberg Weiss (Burgenland).** A taut wine, laced with acidity, citrus fruits and green apples. It's textured, mineral and steely in character, with perfumed Williams pears to add sweetness. Legend Company Group LLC. —R.V.  
**abv:** 12% **Price:** \$NA

**87 Prieler 2010 Pinot Blanc (Leithaberg).** A soft and creamy wine, neutral in character. Fruit flavors show through gently—rounded white fruits with signs of toast and some fresh acidity to finish. Michael Skurnik Wines. —R.V.  
**abv:** 12.5% **Price:** \$NA

**87 Tinhof 2009 Leithaberg.** Soft, warm and rounded wine, this is open and generous. The fruit is rich enough to miss some balancing acidity, although the wine has a rich, yellow fruit character. Legend Company Group LLC. —R.V.  
**abv:** 12.5% **Price:** \$NA

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## SWEET WINES

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**95 Bründlmayer 2009 Steinmassel Riesling Trockenbeerenauslese (Niederösterreich).** Always the star of sweet wines, this TBA Riesling preserves so much freshness while also being packed with honeyed, ripe apricot and mango fruits. It is the acidity along with the dry botrytis that make the wine so special and offer considerable aging potential—give it seven years or more. Michael Skurnik Wines. *Cellar Selection.* —R.V.  
**abv:** 6% **Price:** \$NA/375 ml

**94 Bründlmayer 2009 Kammerner Lamm Grüner Veltliner Trockenbeerenauslese (Niederösterreich).** Superbly rich and sweet, this beautifully honeyed wine has peach and orange marmalade with pineapple acidity. It's a wine of concentration, great richness, the sweetness layered with a dry botrytis character. Age for many years. Michael Skurnik Wines. —R.V.  
**abv:** 7.5% **Price:** \$NA/375 ml

**92 Bründlmayer 2009 Chardonnay Auslese (Niederösterreich).** With its balance of sweetness and acidity, this is a delicious wine that hints at honey as well as pear and ripe melon. There is a touch of wood in the background to give the wine further complexity. Michael Skurnik Wines. —R.V.  
**abv:** 12.5% **Price:** \$NA

**91 Bründlmayer 2009 Gelber Muskateller Trockenbeerenauslese (Niederösterreich).** The sweetness almost masks the natural perfumes of the Gelber Muskateller. However, it does leave a superrich wine, packed with honey and layered with delectable acidity. The aftertaste gives a great burst of orange zest. Michael Skurnik Wines. —R.V.  
**abv:** 6% **Price:** \$NA/375 ml

**80 Lidio Carraro 2010 Da'divas Chardonnay (Vale dos Vinhedos).** Sketchy right away, with salinic, pool water aromas. Awkward and buttery in the mouth, with corn and baked apple flavors. Finishes salty and nutty. Winebow. —M.S.  
**abv:** 13% **Price:** \$20

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## OTHER EUROPE

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### HUNGARIAN REDS

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**90 Sauska 2010 Cuvée 13 (Villány).** Cuvée 13 is Sauska's entry-level bottling, but its elegance and structure seem to indicate otherwise. Sweet and just a bit earthy on the nose, the palate is pristine with a concentrated core of crisp black fruit accented by sprays of fresh mint and violet. A beautifully balanced example of dry Hungarian red wine. Opici Wines. —A.I.  
**abv:** 13.5% **Price:** \$27

**89 Sauska 2008 Cuvée 11 (Villány).** Sauska's premiere bottling, the Cuvée 11 has a hefty dose of Cabernet Franc, giving it a distinct spice and bramble character. It's not a dainty wine at 15% abv, but the palate is clean with focused red fruit accented by fresh herb notes and balanced tannins. Opici Wines. —A.I.  
**abv:** 15% **Price:** \$37

**88 Sauska 2007 Cuvée 7 (Villány).** Rich and sweet on the nose with whiffs of black fruit, cherry vanilla and dark chocolate, Sauska's premiere bottling is unabashedly approachable, yet composed in style. It's a big wine at 15% abv, but fairly clean on the palate with a bright acidity and a cocoa powder layer of tannins on the finish. Opici Wines. —A.I.  
**abv:** 15% **Price:** \$55

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### HUNGARIAN WHITES

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**89 Royal Tokaji 2009 Furmint (Tokaji).** Smoky on the nose with hints of lanolin and heather against a white grapefruit palate, Royal Tokaji's single varietal Furmint is an exciting example of dry Hungarian white wine. Big and bold with a rich, creamy texture, it's balanced by a bright, lemony acidity and an intriguing hit of salt brine on the finish. Wilson Daniels Ltd. —A.I.  
**abv:** 14% **Price:** \$16

**88 Sauska 2009 Birsalmás Furmint (Tokaj).** Buttery and rich with hints of roasted nuts and vanilla caramel, Sauska's single varietal dry Furmint is undeniably big and oaky, but nicely concentrated on the palate with a bold fruit profile and a bright shower of

acidity in the midpalate. Finishes quite long with a whisper of smoke and bitter nut skins. Opici Wines. —A.I.  
**abv:** 14% **Price:** \$43

**88 Sauska 2009 Cuvée 113 (Tokaj).** Apple blossoms and sweetpea notes accent fleshy sweet melon and roasted hazelnut flavors on this unctuous, full-bodied Hungarian dry white. Brisk lemony acidity and a bitter lemon pith note add balance and verve on the finish. Opici Wines. —A.I.  
**abv:** 14% **Price:** \$25

**82 Pinot Evil NV Pinot Grigio (Hungary).** Savory apple scents dominate on the nose with hints of lanolin and sea air. While watery and dilute on entry, there's a pleasant nut oil and nut skin character on the palate. Somewhat clumsy in style with a bit of heat on the finish. The Wine Group. —A.I.  
**abv:** 12% **Price:** \$24/3 L

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### HUNGARIAN ROSÉ

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**87 Sauska 2010 Rosé (Villány).** Perfectly dry, yet bursting with pure, ripe red fruit, Sauska's rosé would be a refreshingly easy apéritif to be enjoyed anytime of the year. Made with a hefty dose of Blaufränkisch, it's clean and fresh on the palate with pretty wildflower notes and zippy sour cherry acidity. Opici Wines. —A.I.  
**abv:** 12.5% **Price:** \$19

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## CROATIA

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**91 Korta Katarina 2006 Reuben's Private Reserve Plavac Mali (Peljesac).** For full review see page 6.  
**abv:** 14.2% **Price:** \$57

**88 Matošević 2009 Alba Malvasia (Istria).** Ripe melon and subtle white flowers meld with fresh apple and pear on the nose and palate of this lovely Malvasia from Ivica Matošević. Quite voluptuous in style with a silky, slightly oily mouthfeel, the palate is bright with sweet stone fruit and a pleasantly bitter almond note that lingers on the finish. New Riviera Imports. —A.I.  
**abv:** 13% **Price:** \$20



## SPIRITS

### A SINGULAR SENSATION: SINGLE-MALT SCOTCH

Out of all the spirits in the world, nothing seems to inspire its devotees quite like whiskey. And out of all the whiskeys in the world, nothing seems to inspire like single-malt Scotch. Some people collect single malts into libraries, travel to Scotland to try elusive offerings and keep fervent tasting diaries.

And why not? Despite the rigorous set of restrictions put in place by the Scotch Whisky Association, it's amazing what single-malt distillers have accomplished. No sweeteners or flavorings can be added, yet somehow caramel sweetness and briny smokiness and Sherried dried-fruit flavors are part of the Scotch flavor vocabulary, all through the masterful application of water, grain and wood. Just a handful of parts.

Despite strict limits, some distillers still push boundaries. Consider, for example the crackly "alligator char" created by distiller Bill Lumsden

to give Ardbeg Alligator its intensely peaty flavor. In the end, it's just a cleverly manipulated barrel, but it gives unique expression to the Scotch.

Or look to John Ramsey's "Legacy" offering for The Glenrothes. The very last expression made before his 2009 retirement, Ramsey carefully selected a range of Speyside malts distilled between 1973 and 1987, and married them into a unique and complex spirit. Yet, all of those spirits were from the same distillery, so the product still gets to bear the "Single Malt Scotch" designation.

Thanks to the efforts of these crafty distillers, the whole of a fine single malt is far greater than the sum of its parts. No wonder single-malt aficionados take their quest for the ultimate Scotch so seriously.

—KARA NEWMAN

**96 The Dalmore Cigar Malt Reserve (Scotland; Shaw-Ross Importers, Miramar, FL).** For full review see page 11.  
abv: 44% Price: \$125

**95 Douglas of Drumlanrig: Laphroaig 17 years old (Scotland; International Spirits & Wines, Mt. Kisco, NY).** For those who prefer a peaty Scotch style, this is an excellent, food-friendly example that won't blow out your palate with smoke. This straw-colored spirit has a pronounced but delicate brininess, which builds gently with repeated sips. Pair this light-bodied spirit with oysters or other shellfish.  
abv: 46% Price: \$189

**95 Glenmorangie The Nectar D'Or 12 Years Old (Scotland; Moët Hennessy USA, New York, NY).** For full review see page 11.  
abv: 46% Price: \$70

**95 Glenmorangie Signet (Scotland; Moët Hennessy USA, New York, NY).** This dark and luscious spirit is made using "high roast" malted barley to coax out chocolate and espresso flavors, then married with other "rare and ancient" whiskies. The end result is a burnished copper glow, intense toffee aroma, resonating espresso, nut and toasty oak flavors and a lingering cinnamon-clove finish. Each sip warms all the way down. A soft, warm spirit in glossy, gift-worthy packaging.  
abv: 46% Price: \$200

**94 Glenfiddich Snow Phoenix (Scotland; William Grant & Sons, New York, NY).** Golden color and a light, meadow-like scent with grassy, floral and green apple notes. The spirit has a soft feel, with a honeyed sweetness and floral-vanilla finish

braced up with a bit of zingy ginger. Adding ice water layers on a whisper of smoke. This limited-edition bottling from 2010 would be a knockout with aged cheeses.  
abv: 47.6% Price: \$90

**94 Glen Garioch 1994 Small Batch Release (Scotland; Skyy Spirits, San Francisco, CA).** This 17-year-old Highland Scotch is well structured and remarkably aromatic. The incredibly rich, buttery vanilla scent all but leaps out of the glass, tempered by fresh apple and floral notes. The flavor is bracing and briny, light-bodied and with just a hint of caramel. Pale straw color.  
abv: 53.9% Price: \$120

**94 The Balvenie 17 Year Old Peated Cask (Scotland; William Grant & Sons, New York, NY).** The tagline on the label reads "sweet spice and smoke," and it's an apt description. This bright amber spirit with golden highlights has a fruity, fresh scent and a light waft of smoke on the palate, finishing with orange peel and caramel. Add water to for a smoother, creamier texture. Just enough smoke and alcohol bite to balance out rich or fried appetizers.  
abv: 43% Price: \$130

**93 Glenmorangie The LaSanta 12 Years Old (Scotland; Moët Hennessy USA, New York, NY).** For full review see page 11.  
abv: 46% Price: \$50

**93 Highland Park Aged 12 Years (Scotland; Remy Cointreau USA, New York, NY).** Elegant, light and pretty. This amber spirit has a light, briny vanilla scent and a silky feel. A veil of smoke rises through the Scotch (but fades out fast), leaving behind a sweet nutty, vanilla finish.  
abv: 43% Price: \$46

**93 Jura Prophecy (Scotland; Shaw-Ross Importers, Miramar, FL).** For full review see page 11.  
abv: 46% Price: \$75

**93 The Dalmore King Alexander (Scotland; Shaw-Ross Importers, Miramar, FL).** For full review see page 11.  
abv: 40% Price: \$268

**93 The Glenlivet 18 Year Old (Scotland; Pernod Ricard USA, Purchase, NY).** For full review see page 11.  
abv: 43% Price: \$90

**92 Auchentoshan Three Wood (Scotland; Skyy Spirits, San Francisco, CA).** The "three wood" name refers to the three casks used to mature this Lowlands Scotch: American Bourbon, Spanish Oloroso Sherry and Pedro Ximenez Sherry. Married together, the result is a maple syrup hue, an oaky, toffee-like scent, and sweet dried-fruit flavors that fade into a lingering, luscious caramel finish. A particularly dessert-friendly single malt.  
abv: 43% Price: \$63

**92 Bowmore 15 Year Old (Scotland; Skyy Spirits, San Francisco, CA).** Sherry cask aging provides this Scotch with a rich, dessert-worthy profile. Look for rich caramel and chocolate notes accented by dry cigar, leather and dried orange peel notes. Amber hue, soft feel. Pair with a rich and creamy dessert like crème brûlée.  
abv: 43% Price: \$70

**92 Douglas of Drumlanrig: Glen Grant Aged 25 Years (Scotland; International Spirits & Wines, Mt. Kisco, NY).** This golden spirit is complex and lush, with a rich caramel-apple scent. On the palate, this 25-year-old Scotch is soft and viscous, as a flash of sweet honey turns to mouthwatering caramel and coconut, with a light dusting of cinnamon and clove. Well balanced despite the relatively high proof.  
abv: 46% Price: \$229

**92 Glenfarclas 40 Year Old (Scotland; Gemini Spirits & Wine, Chicago, IL).** There aren't many 40-year-old Scotches out there. This one makes its age known with a deep nut-brown color and a modest booziness on the nose, in addition to deep toffee, cocoa and hazelnut aromas. Oak is the dominant flavor, finishing with dry cocoa and leather accents. Water helps tease out additional orange peel, nutmeg and toasted coconut tones. Velvety feel.  
abv: 46% Price: \$46

**92 Glen Garioch Founder's Reserve (Scotland; Skyy Spirits, San Francisco, CA).** This vibrant gold Highland Scotch has a caramel scent and a complex flavor, fading from sweet and lightly smoky to dry, with oak, caramel and leather notes sparked with a clove and cinnamon tingle.  
abv: 48% Price: \$45

## 92 Highland Park Aged 18 Years (Scotland; Remy Cointreau USA, New York, NY).

This Scotch is a big boy—look for assertive, brawny flavors and alcohol burn. However, it still has nuance. Aging in Sherry oak casks draws out a dark amber cast and rich caramel, honey and dried-fruit aromas. The flavor grows more interesting with repeated sips—piquant peaty notes are joined by deep, complex toffee.

abv: 43%

Price: \$105

## 92 The Glenlivet Nàdurra Aged 16 Years (Scotland; Pernod Ricard USA, Purchase, NY).

For full review see page 11.

abv: 54.9%

Price: \$60

## 92 The Glenrothes Vintage 1998 (Scotland; Skyy Spirits, San Francisco, CA).

Distilled in 1998, this Speyside Scotch has a soft feel and an enormous butterscotchy flavor and aroma, lightened by dark chocolate, clove and cinnamon fireworks. Pair with chocolate or other dessert fare.

abv: 43%

Price: \$60

## 92 The Macallan 18 Years Old (Scotland; Remy Cointreau USA, New York, NY).

This Speyside single malt is matured in Sherry oak casks from Jerez, Spain, for a minimum of 18 years. The amber spirit has a big, warm caramel flavor, finishing with a touch of sweet honey, bitter chocolate and espresso on the lingering finish. Viscous, creamy mouthfeel.

abv: 43%

Price: \$150

## 91 Ardbeg 10 Years Old (Scotland; Moët Hennessy USA, New York, NY).

For peat lovers only. Pale straw, briny nose. On the palate, this is like a time-release smoke capsule—after a flash of sweetness, the smoke just keeps rolling on in waves. Water adds some softness and mitigates the smoke a bit. Well-constructed and classic. Good value.

abv: 46%

Price: \$55

## 91 Auchentoshan 12 Year Old (Scotland; Skyy Spirits, San Francisco, CA).

Fruity and vegetal scent, in equal measures. Allowed to sit, it shows more caramel, even a light Sherry-ish character. Lots of lovely caramel flavor, with a baking spice finish. Soft, smooth and very sippable. Good value.

abv: 40%

Price: \$50

## 91 Glenfiddich 21 Year Old (Scotland; William Grant & Sons, New York, NY).

Celebrating a special birthday? Here's your bottle: one of the few Scotches finished in Caribbean rum casks. Most of the flavor in this bright amber spirit is on the finish, with its lingering Sherried-fruit, caramel and nuts. A splash of water further amps up the flavor. Pairs well with savory game dishes as well as fruit desserts.

abv: 40%

Price: \$160

## 91 Glen Garioch 1991 Small Batch Release (Scotland; Skyy Spirits, San Francisco, CA).

Lightly smoky and pleasant, with a gentle peated profile that simply drifts in and drifts away. However, the vanilla scent nods to aging in Bourbon casks. Light-bodied and golden; the overproof alcohol level is barely felt, though it's noticeable on the nose. Consider this

one as an apéritif, perhaps paired with bold blue cheeses.

abv: 54.7%

Price: \$100

## 91 Glenmorangie 25 Years Old (Scotland; Moët Hennessy USA, New York, NY).

Know someone celebrating a special quarter-century birthday or anniversary? Splurge on this bottle in gorgeous, gift-worthy packaging—it feels precious before it's even opened. Pour it and let it sit in the snifter for a few minutes for maximum aroma and flavor (and to let some alcohol dissipate). Smooth texture, deep, warm floral and caramel scent. The finish really lingers, shifting among honey-toffee notes, pops of clove and ginger and a touch of oak.

abv: 43%

Price: \$580

## 91 Glenmorangie The Quinta Ruban 12 Years Old (Scotland; Moët Hennessy USA, New York, NY).

For full review see page 12.

abv: 46%

Price: \$50

## 91 The Dalmore 18 Years Old (Scotland; Shaw-Ross Importers, Miramar, FL).

For full review see page 12.

abv: 43%

Price: \$165

## 91 The Glenlivet The French Oak Reserve 15 Years of Age (Scotland; Pernod Ricard USA, Purchase, NY).

For full review see page 12.

abv: 40%

Price: \$50

## 91 The Glenrothes "John Ramsey Legacy" (Scotland; Skyy Spirits, San Francisco, CA).

This limited-edition Speyside single malt was the swan song of John Ramsey, who was the "Malt Master" for Glenrothes from the 1990s through his retirement in June 2009. Only 1,400 bottles were made, and a mere 200 allocated to the U.S. This is a rich and dry Scotch, with a fresh fruity, floral aroma and a light, soft texture. Adding water teases out caramel flavors, along with leather and cocoa.

abv: 46.7%

Price: \$1000

## 91 The Macallan 15 Years Old (Scotland; Remy Cointreau USA, New York, NY).

Golden straw color and a light honeysuckle scent. The flavor is warm and honeyed, with light lychee and pineapple notes drizzled over with caramel and a touch of zingy ginger and cinnamon on the finish. Pair with a honeyed dessert like baklava, or cheeses on the sweeter side.

abv: 43%

Price: \$80

## 90 Ardbeg Alligator (Scotland; Moët Hennessy USA, New York, NY).

Although relatively new to the market, already this rare limited release, made with heavy "alligator char" inside the barrel, has found cult status among peat-loving whiskey enthusiasts. The aroma is intriguing, briny, peppery and pungent, with a breeze of spearmint. On the palate an insistent mix of smoke and sweet caramel evokes barbecue sauce.

abv: 51.2%

Price: \$95

## 90 Auchentoshan Classic (Scotland; Skyy Spirits, San Francisco, CA).

This light-bodied Lowland single malt has a light and intriguing mix

of sweet vanilla, honeysuckle and gentle brininess, like a flower garden by the seaside. Good value.

abv: 40%

Price: \$30

## 90 Balblair 1989 (Scotland; International Beverage, New York, NY).

Based on the pale straw color and tropical fruit scent alone, some might guess this to be a Sauvignon Blanc rather than Highland Scotch. But the first sip tells a different story, showing a fruity flavor with a bit of smoke and a light vanilla finish. Strong alcohol, light body. Attractive bottle with raised curlicue design on the side.

abv: 43%

Price: \$130

## 90 Glenfarclas 17 Year Old. (Scotland; Gemini Spirits & Wine, Chicago, IL).

Amber, with a caramel and apple scent and a big caramel finish mixed with creamy citrus. Brisk alcohol means this smooth spirit is best mixed with alcohol.

abv: 43%

Price: \$92

## 90 Glenmorangie Extremely Rare 18 Years Old (Scotland; Moët Hennessy USA, New York, NY).

For full review see page 12.

abv: 43%

Price: \$100

## 90 Glenmorangie The Original Ten Years Old (Scotland; Moët Hennessy USA, New York, NY).

For full review see page 12.

abv: 43%

Price: \$40

## 90 The Glenlivet 12 Years of Age (Scotland; Pernod Ricard USA, Purchase, NY).

For full review see page 12.

abv: 40%

Price: \$35

## 89 Ardbeg Uigeadail (Scotland; Moët Hennessy USA, New York, NY).

Dark amber color and brooding, smoky scent. Although intense peat is characteristic of Islay Scotches and Ardbeg in particular, here the smoke goes too far. It starts with lovely vanilla, brine and light smoke, but the peat party simply goes on far too long. Adding water softens the feel of this cask-strength Scotch, but does nothing to dampen the smoke.

abv: 54.2%

Price: \$75

## 89 Glen Garioch 12 Years Old (Scotland; Skyy Spirits, San Francisco, CA).

Light amber color, sweet and fruity scent, like apples. The flavor is sweet, with a deeply honeyed finish, and a splash of water brings out a nascent smokiness and spiciness. The alcohol is a little astringent at first. Aged 12 years in American Bourbon and Spanish Sherry casks.

abv: 48%

Price: \$65

## 89 The Glenrothes Vintage 1995 (Scotland; Skyy Spirits, San Francisco, CA).

A Speyside Scotch reminiscent of a zesty lemon meringue pie, with its golden color, vanilla, honey and pineapple scent, and sweet, creamy honey-citrus finish.

abv: 43%

Price: \$54

## 88 Ardbeg Corryvreckan (Scotland; Moët Hennessy USA, New York, NY).

At first, this spirit seems mild, with its gentle amber color and mild, fruity scent. But whoah—this cask-strength Scotch is bold and intense. Smoky flavor thunders

## **BUYING**guide

across the palate, drowning out a mild vanilla sweetness. Meanwhile, the alcohol is the lightning: It burns, even diluted it stings fiercely.

**abv:** 57.1%

**Price:** \$85

**88 Bowmore 12 Year Old (Scotland; Skyy Spirits, San Francisco, CA).** It's a refreshing change of pace to see an Islay Scotch that's not teeming with peatiness. Instead, this honey-colored spirit offers a well-balanced mix of smoke and caramel, with a malty, cookie-dough sweetness in the background, finishing with allspice and caramel. Most of the smoke is on the nose, and the distiller's tasting notes advise: "to fully enjoy the aroma, savour it outside in the fresh air."

**abv:** 40%

**Price:** \$46

**88 Bowmore Tempest Small Batch Release #2 (Scotland; Skyy Spirits, San Francisco, CA).** "Tempest" is an apt name for this Islay single malt, a swirl of smoke and brisk alcohol. Bourbon cask aging adds some caramel flavor and a soft texture.

**abv:** 56%

**Price:** \$100

**88 Douglas of Drumlanrig: Braeval (Scotland; International Spirits & Wines, Mt. Kisco, NY).** This is a light and drinkable spirit with a fresh, tropical fruit aroma, buttery feel and a nicely lingering mix of caramel and spice notes.

**abv:** 46%

**Price:** \$100

**88 Douglas of Drumlanrig: Macallan 21 Year Old (Scotland; International Spirits & Wines, Mt. Kisco, NY).** This dark gold spirit is distilled by Macallan, but bottled by Douglas Laing & Co., an independent bottler and blender, and made with Scotch from a single cask. Save this one for peat lovers; it has a mild fruitiness and a quick-building, long-lingering smoky character.

**abv:** 46%

**Price:** \$189

**88 The Dalmore 15 Year Old (Scotland; Shaw-Ross Importers, Miramar, FL).** This Sherry-aged Highland single malt has a maple syrup color, a caramel aroma and a thick, velvety feel. Expect citrus-tart and butterscotch flavors, with a smoky finish. Add water to mitigate the alcohol burn.

**abv:** 40%

**Price:** \$84

**87 The Dalmore The 1981 Amoroso (Scotland; Shaw-Ross Importers, Miramar, FL).** A honey-colored spirit finished in Sherry casks, with a beautiful sweet aroma of dried fruit and vanilla. On the palate, the flavor is sweet as well, showing peach nectar, caramel, spicy clove and ginger. It's better lightened with water, as the peachiness becomes less intense. Yes, the retail price for this extremely limited offering Scotch (fewer than 500 bottles produced) really is skyward of \$1,000.

**abv:** 42%

**Price:** \$1300

**86 Auchentoshan 1998 Vintage (Scotland; Skyy Spirits, San Francisco, CA).** Sherry-cask maturation shows in the rich, buttery caramel scent and big caramel and nut flavor. This spirit has so much flavor and promise, but it's marred by excess alcohol. Even well diluted, it still stings going down.

**abv:** 54.6%

**Price:** \$80

**86 Glenmorangie Astar (Scotland; Moët Hennessy USA, New York, NY).** At heart, this is a lovely and delicate Scotch, from its fresh, lightly floral scent to the lingering crème brûlée and hazelnut finish. But its delicacy is buried under a mountain of alcohol. Even with copious amounts of water, it's remarkably hot.

**abv:** 57.1%

**Price:** \$80

**86 Jura Superstition (Scotland; Shaw-Ross Importers, Miramar, FL).** "Superstition" is billed as the sweet and delicate one in the Jura line, but it's surprisingly aggressive with the smoke. It starts out mild, with a warm peaty and vegetal scent, a smooth feel and, at first, just a wash of smokiness followed by a mellow caramel finish. But then the smoke reverberates with a vengeance, and it's just altogether too much.

**abv:** 43%

**Price:** \$53

**83 Jura 16 Year Old (Scotland; Shaw-Ross Importers, Miramar, FL).** Maple syrup color, soft feel, vegetal scent, caramel finish. Would have scored higher if not for an off-putting and pervasive resin-like flavor.

**abv:** 43%

**Price:** \$70



## BEER

### BEERS TO WARM YOUR SOUL

**W**ith the holidays just around the corner and the cold days of winter on the horizon, there's no better way to celebrate than with the beautiful bounty of seasonal selections brewers release this time of year. Typically robust and loaded with traditional holiday notes of sweet baking spice, dark fruits like figs and plums and an often roasty character reminiscent of warming by the fire, winter warmers are excellent options for a variety of cool-weather gatherings and feasts.

Winter warmers tend to show a malt-driven core with softer accents of hoppy bitterness, though that will vary depending on the brewer's style and location. Though the addition of spices are not necessary, and are actually more uncommon with international examples,

domestic brewers favor a wassail style—this involves the addition of whole baking spices like cinnamon or nutmeg during the brewing process. Though balanced, they are named for the traditional warming effect achieved during consumption thanks to moderate alcohol content, on average anywhere from five to eight percent abv.

If you're not too keen on those sweet spice flavors, perhaps a stout is the way to go, with their robust chocolate and coffee flavors against a rich malty core.

So next time Old Man Winter is nipping at your heels, try warming up with some seasonally appropriate brews. Before you know it spring will be here, and these beers will be gone, so drink up while you can! *Prost!*

—LAUREN BUZZEO

### WINTER WARMER

**90 Deschutes Jubelale (Winter Warmer; Deschutes Brewery, OR).** Though the spice takes center stage, there's definitely a bitter edge to the mouth and a hop kick on the close of this brew. Otherwise, Jubelale is a typical winter warmer with a gorgeous dark brown color and a beautiful malt- and sweet spice-laden bouquet. Soft glimmers of dried red fruit and a light drizzle of caramel add depth to the mouth, while the finish shows a light roasted cocoa nib expression. Balanced and very drinkable.

abv: 6.7% Price: \$9/12 oz 6 pack

**89 Avery Old Jubilation Ale (Winter Warmer; Avery Brewing Co., CO).** Brewed with a blend of five different malts and no added spices, this is a roasty and nutty winter warmer that satisfies. The amber-flecked mahogany pour boasts strong aromas of earthy hops and pine against the roasted malt core. The full-bodied mouth shows more of the same, with a strong hoppy thread weaving through the hazelnut shell and dark red fruit flavors. A touch of sweet smoke balances out the otherwise bitter finish.

abv: 8.3% Price: \$9/12 oz 6 pack

**89 Samuel Smith's Winter Welcome Ale (Winter Warmer; Samuel Smith Old Brewery [Tadcaster], England).** This is a remarkably well-balanced and drinkable winter warmer. Clean and attractive sweet spice notes of cinnamon, clove, nutmeg and white pepper abound, but they're not cloying or over the top. Dried red fruit and yeasty bread notes appear in the mouth and follow through to the close. Don't serve this one too cold, or else it might

not allow the delicate spice and nuanced notes to fully express themselves.

abv: 6.0% Price: \$4/500 ml

**87 21st Amendment Fireside Chat Winter Spiced Ale (Winter Warmer; 21st Amendment Brewery, CA).** A nice tribute to FDR's Depression-era radio addresses, this canned winter warmer is simultaneously intense and comforting. Notes of rich roasted malt, toffee, sweet baking spice and star anise flood the nose and mouth. Given the depth and strength of aromas and flavors, you expect a certain heft to the mouthfeel that's just not there; overall, it's just a little too light. But it's clean, dry and delicious. A flavorful example of the style.

abv: 7.9% Price: \$9/12 oz 6 pack

**86 Four in Hand Winter Brew (Winter Warmer; World Brews, NY).** An approachable and drinkable brew with aromas of allspice, orange zest and a touch of caramel. The characteristics of the bouquet carry through to the medium-weight mouth, with additional notes of baked apples and soft hops. A warming sweet spice flavor lingers after each swallow.

abv: 6.2% Price: \$7/12 oz 6 pack

**85 Hopper Whitman Winter Brew (Winter Warmer; World Brews, NY).** A new selection in the World Brews lineup, Winter Brew is an easygoing and attractively priced seasonal that offers a lighter experience for those who don't like too much spice in their brews. Medium weight with light aromas and flavors of baking spice, caramel square and apple pie. Short and crisp on the finish.

abv: 6.2% Price: \$6/12 oz 6 pack

## STOUT

**91 Samuel Adams Black & Brew Coffee Stout (American Stout; The Boston Beer Co., MA).** Unfortunately, this new BBC brew is only available as a part of the Winter Variety Pack (along with Winter Lager, Chocolate Bock, Old Fezziwig Ale, Holiday Porter and Boston Lager). With 1.5 pounds of Sumatran coffee per barrel, this is a rich stout with assertive roasted coffee aromas and flavors. Secondary notes of bittersweet cocoa powder, dried date, roasted fig and toasty malt lift up the intense coffee backbone, with a touch of husky charred grain adding texture and a touch of bitterness to the long close. With moderate alcohol, you can actually enjoy a few of these in one sitting.

abv: 5.8% Price: \$14/12 oz 12 pack

**90 Ninkasi Oatis Oatmeal Stout (Oatmeal Stout; Ninkasi Brewing Company, OR).** Although known to many for producing outstanding hop-heavy brews, Ninkasi can also turn out a mean oatmeal stout that shows strength and balance all at once. Pours a gorgeous dark brown color with a thick beige head that lingers. Roasted malt, cocoa nibs and sweet mocha latte aromas waft from the glass, while the medium-weight mouth exhibits a beautiful creamy texture that's lush but smooth and approachable. A touch of sweet smoke and a charred malt grittiness lingers on the finish.

abv: 7.2% Price: \$4/22 oz

**89 Harpoon 100 Barrel Series Session 36 Island Creek Oyster Stout (American Stout; Harpoon Brewery, MA).** Although the thought of an oyster stout might not sound appealing to most, one sip and you'll be a convert, especially if you pair it with freshly shucked oysters. Brewed with freshly harvested Island Creek oysters, there's a superb briny minerality to this beer, weaving throughout all the other typically roasty malt and coffee characteristics. The carbonation is bright but not jarring, and the finish toasty but clean. Moderate alcohol makes this a bomber you can finish without friends.

abv: 5.5% Price: \$5/22 oz

**88 Stone Collaborations 2011 Cherry Chocolate Stout (American Stout; Stone Brewing Co., CA).** A collaboration between two professional breweries, Tröegs and Stone, and two competition-winning homebrewers, Jason Fields and Kevin Sheppard. The beer pours dark, almost black, with a dense head that leaves nice lacing behind. The bouquet is quite intense, with prominent scents of sour cherries, bittersweet chocolate, espresso grinds and heavily roasted malt. Those characteristics carry through to the creamy mouth, with tart cherries taking the lead and an additional flavor of molasses adding depth to the dark chocolate sweetness.

abv: 7.3% Price: \$3/12 oz