



WINE ENTHUSIAST[®]

MAGAZINE

BUYING GUIDE

In quiet, dimly lit cellars, Champagne undergoes its second fermentation nestled in *pupitres*.

PHOTO JOE CORNISH/GETTY IMAGES

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Champagne STILL THE ULTIMATE SPARKLING WINE

Despite all of the time and energy invested all over the world, one sparkling wine still stands as the benchmark by which all others are judged. Credit the Champenois for their know-how, their terroir or—more cynically—their marketing, but give them credit nonetheless, for Champagne is to most people the ne plus ultra of sparkling wines.

And among the rarefied world of luxury cuvées, that certainly remains the case. Krug's 1998 Clos du Mesnil grabs the crown among this year's releases, scoring that elusive perfect 100-point rating, but other wines aren't far behind. Bollinger, Dom Pérignon, Henriot, Taittinger—all garner 96 points or more in this issue's Buying Guide. Wines at this transcendent level of quality are fun to read about, even if we can't afford to drink them every day. Maybe we can get away

with just one splurge around the holidays?

If your vinous preferences include ageworthy red wines, turn to Italian Editor Monica Lamer's latest reviews of Piedmont's Barolo and Barbaresco. These are wines that can age gracefully for 20 years or more when cellared properly, and the best time to buy them is on release, so that you can be certain your bottle has been well cared for when you open it up in 2025. From Arborina to Villero in Barolo and Asili to Santo Stefano in Barbaresco, you're almost guaranteed to find your favorite cru represented here.

Elsewhere in this month's Buying Guide, you'll also find reviews of wines from Austria and Eastern Europe, California, Washington and Chile. Remember to check out our online Buying Guide at buyingguide.winemag.com, as only a selection of wines reviewed for December appear in print. Cheers! —JOE CZERWINSKI

VINTAGE CHAMPAGNES PRIOR TO 2000

100 Krug 1998 Clos du Mesnil (Champagne); \$1,400. A wine that has created its own universe. It has a unique, special softness that allies with the total purity that comes from a small, enclosed single vineyard. The fruit is almost irrelevant here, because it comes as part of a much deeper complexity. This is a great wine, at the summit of Champagne, a sublime, unforgettable experience. Imported by Moët Hennessy USA. **Cellar Selection.** —R.V.

99 Moët & Chandon 1996 Dom Pérignon Oenothèque Brut (Champagne); \$385. A magnificent Champagne, one that is light, delicate, yet packed with character. It is beautifully balanced, with a bone-dry character, just softened by the toastiness that is developing. Expect this to age for many years. Imported by Moët Hennessy USA. **Cellar Selection.** —R.V.

98 Henriot 1995 Cuvée des Enchanteleurs Brut (Champagne); \$170. A glorious Champagne, now at the peak of its powers and maturity. It is rich, creamy, lightly toasty, cookies and yeast pro-

pell the fruits and acidity forward into a wonderful texture. This wine confirms Henriot's place at the top tables of Champagne. Imported by Henriot Inc. —R.V.

97 Bollinger 1997 RD Brut (Champagne); \$260. Disgorged in 2009, this is a toasty wine, rich and concentrated. The idea of long aging before disgorging the yeast cells is to build up the unique complexity of the wine. In this Bollinger has succeeded magnificently. An opulent wine, with aging potential for 10 years or more. Imported by Terlato Wines International. **Cellar Selection.** —R.V.

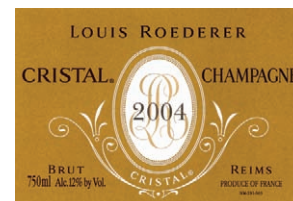
97 Henriot 1996 Cuvée des Enchanteleurs Brut (Champagne); \$185. With all the extreme intensity of this vintage, this wine brings even more. The start of cookie yeast and toast character, a vibrant mineral texture, hints of spice, green herbs and a final white peach flavor. It is still young, just keep aging. Imported by Henriot Inc. **Cellar Selection.** —R.V.

96 Krug 1998 Brut (Champagne); \$350. Although the aromas are toasty, the flavors are still so fresh, rich, complex. This is a wonderful expression of taut minerality, pure citrus zest and then a wood-toast character that gives the wine both richness and sophistication.

Continued on page 97



97 Henriot 1996 Cuvée des Enchanteleurs Brut (Champagne); \$185. With all the extreme intensity of this vintage, this wine brings even more. The start of cookie yeast and toast character, a vibrant mineral texture, hints of spice, green herbs and a final white peach flavor. It is still young, just keep aging. Imported by Henriot Inc. **Cellar Selection.**



97 Louis Roederer 2004 Cristal Brut (Champagne); \$229. Exceptionally rich and dense, an exceptional wine that reveals itself in layers, from the first fruit attack to the mineral texture and the way it gradually fills the mouth. Selected from old vines, there is a great flavor in this wine, with the promise of many years' aging. Imported by Maisons Marques & Domaines USA. **Cellar Selection.**



95 Ceretto 2005 Bricco Rocche Bricco Barolo (Barolo); \$252. Nebbiolo grapes, with their naturally elegant aromas of black currant and licorice, speak loudly. So does winery magic: Tones of spice, leather, cola and tobacco are derived from 24 months of careful oak aging. The tannins are fine and tight and this wine will age ten years or more. Imported by Wilson Daniels Ltd. **Cellar Selection.**



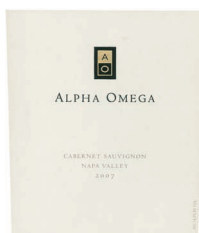
95 Gainey 2008 Limited Selection Pinot Noir (Sta. Rita Hills); \$48. An absolutely lovely Pinot, the best in Gainey's long career. Dry, smooth and silky, it defines Pinot's more Burgundian side, with mushroomy notes along with perfectly ripe cherries and raspberries, accented with brilliant acidity. The oak treatment is tasteful and blends in seamlessly, offering a hint of toast. The wine treads an exciting line between ripeness and earthiness, while keeping alcohol to a refreshingly low 14.1%. This is a connoisseur's wine. **Editors' Choice.**



95 Henriot 1998 Millésimé Brut (Champagne); \$95. Just touching maturity, this is a wonderful wine. With intense acidity, yeast, minerality and a beautiful final citrus texture, this is ready to drink but will age for many years. Imported by Henriot Inc.



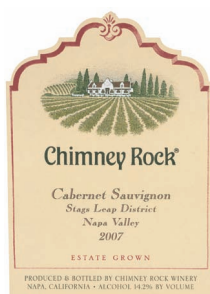
95 Laurent-Perrier 1998 Grand Siècle Alexandra Brut Rosé (Champagne); \$390. A wonderful wine that has preserved its freshness while welcoming elements of toasty maturity. It is crisp, definitely on the dry side, with red currants, bright wild strawberries over the purest acidity. It's sure to age over many years, but, if you must, can be drunk now. Imported by Laurent-Perrier U.S. **Cellar Selection.**



94 Alpha Omega 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$82. There's a tannic toughness to this young wine. It's like chewing on dried black currants. Once they start to dissolve in the mouth, lovely flavors of sweet blackberries emerge, and then take over through a very long, spicy finish. It's quite a beautiful Napa Cabernet, but it does need time. Best 2013–2019. **Cellar Selection.**



94 Cakebread 2006 Dancing Bear Ranch Cabernet Sauvignon (Howell Mountain); \$105. This is a very rich wine. Complex, too. With every sip, it seems to offer a little more of itself. On the surface, it's dry, tannic and fruity, with blackberry, black currant, dark chocolate and cedar flavors. But it has mineral and herb nuances that seem to spring from the soil, and the depth and finish are impressive. Drinkable now for sheer luxury, and should continue to develop over the next decade.



94 Chimney Rock 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Stags Leap District); \$61. This is Chimney Rock's best Stags Leap Cabernet since the 2005, and continues a string of successful vintages. Dry and smooth and silky in the mouth, it's pretty tannic, but very rich, offering waves of cherry, blackberry, blueberry, cocoa and sweet cedar flavors. Absolutely delicious, wonderfully elegant, and should age well for a decade.



94 Dumas Station 2006 Minnick Hills Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon (Walla Walla); \$60. Rich, concentrated, and loaded with smoky, dark, spicy fruit flavors, this is a full-on Bordeaux blend, with Cabernet Franc, Merlot and Petit Verdot. There's plenty of barrel influence, from 70% new French oak, but it's welcome, and appropriate, perfectly matched to the power of the fruit. An underlayer of woody earth and mushroom adds further complexity. **Cellar Selection.**



94 Elvio Cogno 2006 Cascina Nuova (Barolo); \$45. Wow, what a wonderful wine, delivering rich notes of black fruit, vanilla, cherry and spice. But the aromas are in no way obvious. In fact, this is an ethereal and elegant wine that pays attention to the little details, like the light shadings of polished stone and violets that liven up the long finish. Drink after 2018. Imported by Vias Imports. **Cellar Selection.**

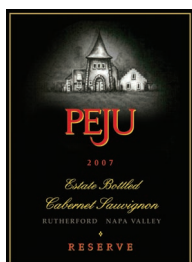


94 Justin 2007 Isosceles Reserve (Paso Robles); \$95. A tremendous wine that easily held its own against Napa Cabs and blends, and a worthy followup to the wonderful 2006. Mainly Cabernet Sauvignon, with small amounts of Cabernet Franc and Merlot, the wine is extraordinarily rich and balanced and refined, showing Paso softness, but no absence of complexity. Really impresses for the depth and range of berries, currants, licorice, mocha, herbs, spices and oak. Now–2015.

BUYING GUIDE



94 Meander 2007 Morisoli Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Rutherford); \$120. Such are the tannins in this 100% Cab that it demands cellar time. It's really shut down and astringent in youth, which emphasizes the dryness. But it's very fine, with a solid core of ripe black cherry fruit that will express its sweetness when the tannins melt away. Winemaker Amy Aiken is really showing her stuff with this polished ager. Best 2013–2019. **Cellar Selection.**



94 Peju 2007 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon (Rutherford); \$105. Erupts out from the glass with beautiful Cabernet perfume, suggesting cherry pie from the oven, licorice, sandalwood and dusty dried herbs, like sage and thyme. Very dry, with a long spicy finish, but also quite tannic, although lots of the tannins come from new oak. Best to age this polished 100% Cab for at least six years.



94 Renato Ratti 2006 Marcenasco (Barolo); \$50. Dark in color with a modern style and velvety extraction, the gorgeous Marcenasco expression of Barolo is redolent of blackberries, cherries, spice, leather and tobacco. The finish is long and elegant but not without power and determination. Keep this wine cellared for ten years plus. Imported by Dreyfus, Ashby & Co.



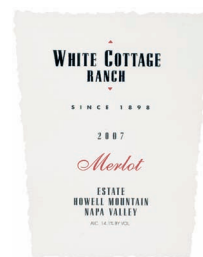
94 Schramsberg 2007 Blanc de Noirs Brut (North Coast); \$38. Mainly Pinot Noir, with some Chardonnay for brightness and citrusy zest, this brilliantly clean wine has an incredibly fierce mousse. It seems to boil in the glass, and the followup mouthfeel is as creamy and refined as any California sparkler in memory. The Pinot asserts itself in delicate touches of raspberries and strawberries. Delicious and compelling now. Try with sushi. **Editors' Choice.**



94 Schramsberg 2007 Brut Rosé (North Coast); \$41. With a pretty pink-salmon color, this Pinot Noir-based blush is rich and full-bodied. It has considerable weight for a bubbly, but the acidity and freshness and yeasty tang lift it up to Champagne elegance. Impossible not to fall in love with this raspberry-scented beauty, but why wouldn't you want to?



94 Schramsberg 2003 J. Schram (North Coast); \$100. A beautiful, rich, elegant, fancy sparkling wine. Feels so fine in the mouth, all silk and satin, with deep, dry raspberry, strawberry, vanilla, toast, yeasty lees, brioche and honey flavors. Superb, but young. Needs time. Give it until 2011, if you can keep your hands off, and should develop until 2015, if not longer. **Cellar Selection.**



94 White Cottage Ranch 2007 Estate Merlot (Howell Mountain); \$50. The best things about this Merlot are its extreme dryness, tannin integrity and relative austerity. It's a pleasure to drink a Merlot that's not a fruit bomb. That doesn't mean you won't find complex flavors of blackberries and currants. You will. It means that this extraordinary Merlot is pushing the envelope on what California, and Napa Valley in particular, is able to achieve in making Merlot along classically structured lines. **Editors' Choice.**



93 Conspire 2008 Russian River Pinot Noir (Sonoma County); \$42. Richly textured, this Pinot comes from the Sebastopol area. In this cool vintage, it has a bright burst of acidity and is very dry, with intricate flavors of raspberries, cherries, pomegranates, licorice, sweet oak and lots of dusty spices. Now–2014.



93 Gosset 2000 Grand Millésime Brut (Champagne); \$90. A soft and beautifully ripe Champagne, albeit with a steely, mineral core. It is very much in the Gosset pure, dry style, full of apple and grapefruit acidity to go with a light yeast character. Unlike some 2000s, this should age well. Imported by Palm Bay International.



93 Marcarini 2006 Brunate (Barolo); \$60. This is a lovely, layered wine with unusual (but seductive) aromas of cassis, wild berry, violet, chopped mint, pine nut, iron, clove and savory black pepper. The finish is tight and dusty with finely textured tannins that fade after a long while. Drink after 2015. Imported by Empson (USA) Ltd.



93 Michele Chiarlo 2006 Cerequio (Barolo); \$100. This edition of the prized Cerequio Barolo by Michele Chiarlo flaunts its own unique personality with immediate aromas of white cherry, red apple, tar, licorice powder and root beer. It's a polished, squeaky-clean wine with a long finish that seems more buoyant and vertical compared to past vintages. Imported by Kobrand.



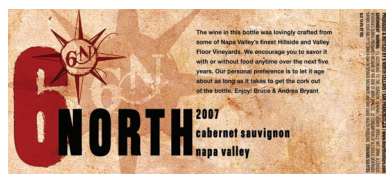
93 Monticello 2007 Tietjen Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Rutherford); \$65. Deeply scented, a big, powerhouse Cabernet grown on the Rutherford bench. It's dense, chewy and meaty, showing blackberry jam, blueberry, chocolate and sweet smoky oak. The tannins are thick and furry, as befits such a young, ageable wine. Hold until 2013, and it should develop through 2019. **Cellar Selection.**



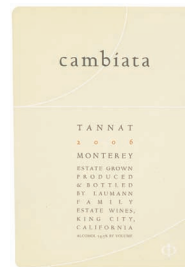
93 Petroni 2008 Chardonnay (Napa Valley); \$30. A very nice Chardonnay that offers enough richness to justify the price, yet retains an elegant restraint that won't overpower food. Dry, creamy and brisk, it shows pineapple tart, ripe white peach, buttered toast and vanilla flavors, with a mouthwatering minerality. Production was 800 cases. **Editors' Choice.**



93 Taittinger 2004 Comtes de Champagne Rosé Brut (Champagne); \$290. A gloriously rich rosé that is full of ripe raspberries that burst in the mouth. It has a tight texture, balanced by a rounded feel. It is still young, of course, and the sweet finish needs time to integrate. Even so, relish the wine now, or wait 3–4 years. Imported by Kobrand.



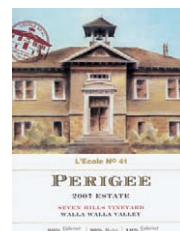
92 6 North 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$52. This new brand is sourced from various vineyards throughout the valley. It's very ripe and interesting, offering the rich flavors and balance of the vintage. Gentle now in blackberries, black currants, anise and sweet cedar wood, and should develop over the next 5–6 years.



92 Cambiata 2006 Tannat (Monterey); \$28. No winery in California has explored this French variety more than Cambiata, and with the '06, they've produced another interesting wine. It has weight and body and tannins, with wild black and red berry, currant, cherry liqueur, Provençal herb, tobacco and roasted meat flavors that finish with sweetness, although the wine is totally dry.



92 Damilano 2006 Cannubi (Barolo); \$76. The prized Cannubi cru offers fruit that is interpreted by some of the finest winemakers in northern Italy. This expression from the dynamic Damilano winery is characterized by tight tannins, power, personality and ripe berry flavors. Pair this Barolo with risotto topped with thinly shaved truffles. Imported by Vias Imports.

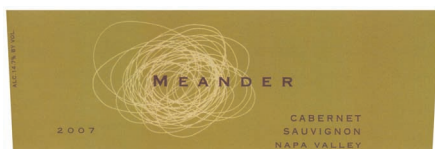


92 L'Ecole No. 41 2007 Seven Hills Vineyard Estate Perigee (Walla Walla); \$50. Tart and leafy, this is still resolving into a fully integrated wine. It already shows balance and depth, with a mix of plum, fig, black cherry and cassis fruit, a streak of sweet chocolate and hints of baking spice. From a great vintage, this has the balance and stuffing to age, but if you can't keep your hands off it, decant.

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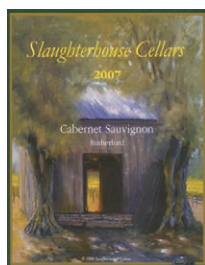
92 Laurent-Perrier 2000 Brut Millésimé (Champagne); \$69. A soft, ripe Champagne, as befits the year. Attractive apples, spice and toast go beautifully with sweet acidity. It is developing richness and weight, although not likely to age over many years. Imported by Laurent-Perrier U.S.



92 Meander 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$65. A beautiful 100% Cabernet that comes from Rutherford and St. Helena. It's soft and dry and ultrarich, with blackberry, cherry, licorice, cola, spice and smoky new oak flavors. Seems best now and through 2014.



92 Pio Cesare 2006 Barolo; \$61. Here is a classic expression of Barolo from a very good vintage that opens with bright fruit aromas that are embellished by carefully measured oak tones. You'll recognize blackberry, cassis, tobacco, mineral, cola and humus. The tannins are young and this wine requires more years of bottle aging. Imported by Maisons Marques & Domaines USA.



92 Slaughterhouse Cellars 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Rutherford); \$50. There's lots of new French oak on this Cabernet, but the underlying wine is powerful enough to take it. Shows rich, gentle tannins and fine acidity framing complex, flavorful cherry, blackberry and raspberry fruit. The near-perfect balance suggests cellaring for a decade or longer, although the wine is pretty enough to drink now.



92 Sonoma-Cutrer 2008 Russian River Ranches Chardonnay (Sonoma Coast); \$23. This is a lovely Chardonnay, a super restaurant wine list bottle. Dry and creamy, it offers pleasantly rich pineapple, lime pie, green apple, exotic spice and buttered toast flavors, accented with crisp, clean acidity.



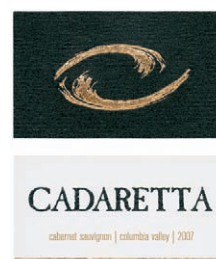
92 Tres Sabores 2007 Perspective Cabernet Sauvignon (Rutherford); \$80. Young and oaky now, with toast, vanilla and woodspice aromas and flavors that tend to dominate the underlying cherry, cranberry and raspberry fruit. Feels fat and sweetly opulent, with smooth, fine tannins. Should develop gradually over the next decade.



92 Vina Robles 2007 Suendero (Paso Robles); \$49. A little soft in acidity, in the way of Paso wines, but with just-in-time zest and tannins that give the flavors some structure. Mainly Cabernet Sauvignon, with 14% Petit Verdot, the wine is dry and rich, with blackberry, currant, cola, dark chocolate, violet, anise and cedar flavors. One of the more complex Bordeaux-style wines from this area. Drink now.



92 Vina Robles 2007 Syrée (Paso Robles); \$39. Shows enormous complexity of flavor, a wine that really impresses for its myriad blackberry, cherry, currant, cola, grilled meat, sautéed mushroom, violet and chocolate flavors. If the structure were more firm, it would be a perfect wine. But this is Paso Robles, where the wines will always be soft. A blend of Syrah and Petite Sirah.



91 Cadaretta 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Columbia Valley); \$40. Cadaretta's largest production red is drinking beautifully in this exceptional vintage. It seems to be moving into midlife softness, with a well-integrated blend of plums, cassis and black cherries, highlighted with clove and coffee. Complex and detailed, its tannins are grainy and dark, adding heft and gravitas to the fruit.



91 L'Ecole No. 41 2007 Merlot (Columbia Valley); \$28. This is a beautiful wine from the nose on out. Complex and aromatic, it has Italian-style tobacco scents, fresh acidity, leafy highlights, and undertones of tar, licorice and clove, all wrapped around tart, pie cherry fruit.



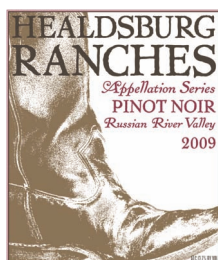
91 White Cottage Ranch 2007 Risa Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$40. What a nice Cabernet this is. It's so dry and well-structured, tantalizing your palate with hints of richness instead of swamping it with fruit and oak. Shows summer-ripe, briary blackberry and black currant flavors, with grounding notes of dried herbs, violets, tobacco, licorice and cedar, leading to a distinguished finish. Now—2013.



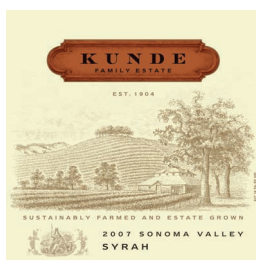
90 Cadaretta 2006 Springboard (Columbia Valley); \$50. A limited-production Bordeaux blend, this is a vineyard/barrel selection by now-departed Cadaretta winemaker Virginie Bourgue. It's silky and deep, with penetrating black fruits and toasted, roasted coffee barrel flavors. Seductive and smooth, this is an elegant wine that warrants cellaring.



90 Cadaretta 2007 Windthrow (Columbia Valley); \$50. Cadaretta's Windthrow is a limited-release southern Rhône blend of 37% Syrah, 27% Mourvèdre, 18% Cunoise and 18% Grenache. The fruit is just ripe enough, clean and juicy, with a spicy and tart mouthfeel. What's most surprising is the length—the wine seems to gather itself and push on through a full-throttle finish, adding nougat and vanilla custard to the mix.



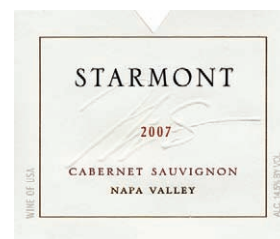
90 Healdsburg Ranches 2009 Appellation Series Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); \$19. Great price for a Pinot Noir this rich and fancy. It really flatters the palate, offering waves of raspberry, cherry, root beer, vanilla and sandalwood flavors, with a spicy finish. The light, silky texture is especially nice, as is the low alcohol balance. *Editors' Choice.*



90 Kunde 2007 Syrah (Sonoma Valley); \$18. A beautiful Syrah, richly textured and delicious. Held back for three years, it's perfect now for the soft texture, and the raspberry, cherry and orange zest flavors have a spicy edge. Complexity is enhanced with additions of Petite Sirah, Sangiovese, Barbera, Grenache and Viognier. *Editors' Choice.*



90 Scharffenberger NV Brut (Mendocino County); \$19. Great price for a brut this classically structured. Made from Pinot Noir and Chardonnay, it's dry and crisp, with a fine mousse that gives it a creamy smooth mouthfeel. The pineapple, raspberry and vanilla flavors are delicious. *Editors' Choice.*

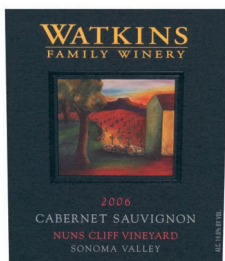


90 Starmont 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$27. Pretty good price for a Cabernet this elegant and rich. Starmont is a kind of second label to the excellent producer, Merryvale, and this '07 shows a fine pedigree, as well as the general quality of the vintage. It's dry and balanced, with complex blackberry, currant and oak flavors. Drink now—2013.

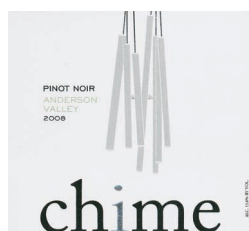


90 Vina Robles 2007 Signature Estate Cuvée (Paso Robles); \$39. A little too soft in both acidity and tannins to have perfect structure, but it's fine enough, and the flavors certainly are complex and compelling. They range from blackberry tart and cherry pie through Dr. Pepper cola and anise liqueur to bacon and sandalwood. If that sounds good, it is. Ready now.

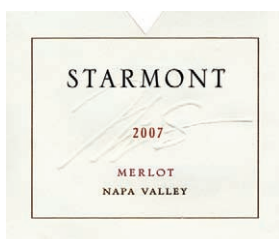
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90 Watkins Family 2006 Nuns Cliff Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Sonoma Valley); \$38. What's so likeable about this Cabernet is the dryness and the overall balance, which is stylish and elegant. It keeps the blackberry and black currant fruit in check with earthier tones of tobacco and olives.



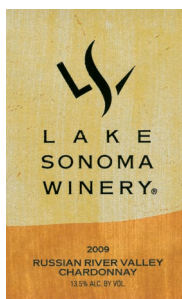
88 Chime 2008 Pinot Noir (Anderson Valley); \$18. This is a fine Pinot Noir. May not be as full-bodied or fruity as some, but it's truly elegant, crisply refined, and thoroughly dry, offering raspberry, rhubarb, tangerine zest and Dr. Pepper cola flavors that are wrapped into a silky texture. Production was a low 820 cases. *Editors' Choice.*



88 Starmont 2007 Merlot (Napa Valley); \$26. A dry, gentle Merlot, likeable for its rich tannic structure and complex flavors. Shows berry, cherry, currant, dark chocolate and sandalwood flavors, with a clean, spicy finish. Drink now with a nice grilled steak, brushed with garlic butter and plenty of pepper.



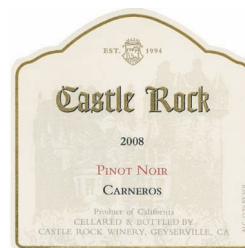
87 Korbel 2008 Riesling (California); \$16. A rare California sparkler made from the Riesling grape, and a pretty good one. It's slightly sweet, with very pretty flavors of oranges, vanilla, buttered toast and creamy lees. Good price for such a fancy sipper. *Editors' Choice.*



87 Lake Sonoma 2009 Chardonnay (Russian River Valley); \$17. A nice Chardonnay that shows ripe pineapple, green apple and pear flavors, with added smoky richness from oak, and the finish is dry and crisp. A good price for a wine of this quality.



87 Valley of the Moon 2009 Pinot Blanc (Sonoma County); \$16. Feels like Chardonnay, with full-bodied vanilla cream, pineapple and buttered toast flavors, but veers in its own direction with a strong note of tangerines. Delicious now with seared scallops.



86 Castle Rock 2008 Pinot Noir (Carneros); \$14. This dry, silky Pinot Noir is a good introduction to the variety, for those who want to learn more about it without paying a premium price. It shows proper cherry, raspberry and cola flavors, with a spicy finish.



86 Maniña 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon (Central Valley); \$13. Rubber and black fruits carry the standard nose, then comes a zesty palate with upfront acids and related zingy berry fruit flavors. Despite a touch of scour, this brings freshness and a clean, tasty fruit level. Perfectly good for Central Valley Cabernet. Imported by Winery Exchange.

BESTBUYS

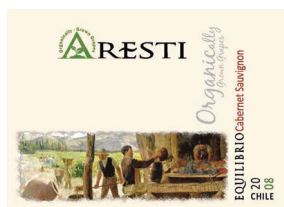


91 L'Ecole No. 41 2009 Sémillon (Columbia Valley); \$15. Blended with 17% Sauvignon Blanc, this lovely Sémillon is exceptionally fragrant, satiny and rich, with fleshy, ripe fruits and just a hint of toast. A warm streak of caramel enlivens the finish, which lingers gracefully and fills the palate with delicious flavors of apples and spicy pears.

BESTBUYS



- 91 Tangent 2009 Paragon Vineyard Sauvignon Blanc (Edna Valley); \$13.** Tangent makes the best, most consistent unoaked Sauvignon Blanc in California. The 2009 is another classic, offering brilliantly clean, crisp flavors of citrus fruits, green apples and gooseberries. Just beautiful.



- 88 Aresti 2008 Equilibrio Organically Grown Grapes Cabernet Sauvignon (Maipo Valley); \$11.** There's plenty of black fruit and power on the nose. The palate matches that aromatic intensity by showing tannic grab and body along with deep cherry, cassis and tobacco flavors. Finishes earthy and leathery, but with enough berry fruit and richness. Imported by Broadbent Selections, Inc.



- 88 Delicato 2009 Pinot Grigio (California); \$7.** Made in an appealingly dry, tartly crisp style, this is a fine cocktail sipper to drink with appetizers. It impresses for its rich citrus fruit, lemongrass, mineral and papaya flavors, and as dry as they are, the finish is honeyed. Production was 21,000 cases.

BESTBUYS



- 88 Korbel NV Sweet Rosé (California); \$12.** Even if you don't like sweet sparkling wine, it will be hard to turn down another glass of this beauty. It's so clean and delicious, with a raspberry sorbet and vanilla richness. One of the best sweet bubbles out there, at a great price.



- 87 Korbel NV Blanc de Noirs (California); \$12.** Made from all red grapes, including Pinot Noir, Gamay, Sangiovese and Zinfandel, this is an elegant, delicious sipper that has more elegance than you might expect at this price. It's dryish and crisply clean, with subtle strawberry, raspberry and yeasty flavors.

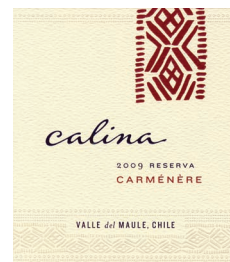


- 87 Korbel NV Brut Rosé (California); \$12.** A delightful rosé sparkler, rich in raspberry, cherry and toasty, yeasty flavors, with a smooth, creamy mouthfeel and a honey-sweet finish. Made from Pinot Noir, Sangiovese, Gamay and Chenin Blanc, it's a super value at this price.

BESTBUYS



- 87 Veo 2008 Última Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon (Colchagua Valley); \$10.** Sweet and chunky to start, with vanilla and red fruit aromas. The flavors are raspberry and cherry, and while it's kind of short on complexity, it more than gets the job done for \$10. Clean, fresh and something you can drink without a lot of pondering. Imported by Prestige Wine Group.



- 86 Calina 2009 Reserva Carmenère (Maule Valley); \$10.** Warm, syrupy, jammy and brambly up front, with the grape's typical meaty, herbal aromas. The palate is soft save for core acidity, while the flavors run medium-rich and plummy, with controlled sourness. Solid for the money, with a chunky disposition. Imported by Sovereign Wine Imports.



- 86 Chime 2009 Pinot Noir (California); \$11.** A great buy in a useful Pinot Noir that is not without appeal. It's bone dry, tart and elegant, with a light, silky mouthfeel framing cherry and cola flavors. One of the best Pinots at this price range.

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86 Espiritu de Chile 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Central Valley); \$9.

Tropical and also citric, and holding steady as the 2010s hit the market. The palate here is familiar, tangy and well constructed, with sweet melon and zesty citrus flavors offsetting one another. The finish is easy and overall this is a fresh, clean, modest wine that should be drunk right away. Imported by Cecchetti Racke.



86 Vini 2008 Vini Vidi Vici Cabernet Sauvignon (Thracian Valley); \$8.

Herbaceous notes of dill and green wood converge with ripe, sweet plum and spice aromas on this medium-bodied, bargain Bulgarian Cabernet Sauvignon. Although initially soft with notes of sweet black-

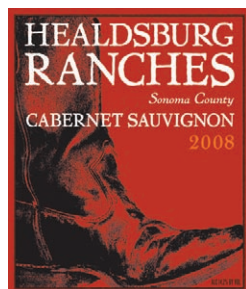
berry, it gains earthiness in the midpalate. Firm tannins offer structure, but the vanilla finish drops a bit abruptly. Imported by Bulgarian Master Vintners.



85 Veo 2009 Grande Cabernet Sauvignon (Colchagua Valley); \$7.

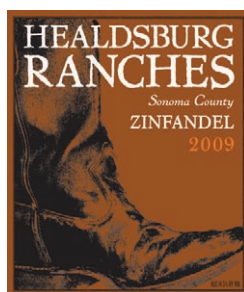
Bargain hunters should like this mildly medicinal Cab because it's got raspberry and black fruit character and only minor faults, i.e. slight medicinal. Otherwise it's fruity, steady and respectable, with good body and mouthfeel. Imported by Prestige Wine Group.

BESTBUYS



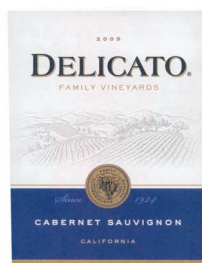
85 Healdsburg Ranches 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (Sonoma County); \$10.

Good price for a nice, dry Cabernet with so much fruit. It's forward in ripe blackberry, blueberry and cherry jam flavors, with a rich coat of smoky oak.



85 Healdsburg Ranches 2009 Zinfandel (Sonoma County); \$10.

Here's a good, fruity Zinfandel to drink with your barbecue, and the everyday price is right. It's dry and tart in berries, cherries and spices, with Zin's wild, briary personality.



84 Delicato 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon (California); \$7.

A good buy for its dryness and overall balance. You won't mistake it for a cult Cabernet, but the blackberry and currant flavors work.

BEER



95 Allagash Curieux Ale Aged in Oak Bourbon Barrels (Tripel; Allagash Brewing, ME); 11% abv, \$15/750 ml.

Curieux (French for curious) is a Belgian Tripel Ale aged in Jim Beam barrels for eight weeks. Introduced in 2004, this is the June 2010 bottling, for which 825 cases were produced. The nose is loaded with spice, citrus, banana and sour stone fruit with vanilla accents. Big and weighty in the mouth with a lush roundness provided by the elevated abv. While the alcohol is noticeable it's bal-

anced by peppery spice and Bourbon notes mingling with stone fruit flavors. The moderate effervescence lightens the intense profile, leading through to a clean but lingering finish.



92 Uinta Crooked Line Series Labyrinth Black Ale (American Double/Imperial Stout; Uinta Brewing Co., UT); 13.2% abv, \$12/750 ml.

At a whopping 13.2%, you'd think you're in for a brute of a beer, but this imperial stout brewed with licorice sticks and aged in oak barrels is one beautifully balanced and ageworthy selection. Black as night with an attractive nose of dark stone fruit, chocolate, roasted espresso beans, licorice, charred grain and vanilla. The aromas carry through to the mouth, where the toasted malt and nutty oak dominate the sweeter attributes of caramel sauce and burnt toffee. Creamy and robust with a slightly viscous feel, low carbonation and a lingering tannic bitterness on the close.

tion. Given the fresh, intense fruit, this will certainly age for many years. Imported by Moët Hennessy USA. **Cellar Selection.** —R.V.

96 Moët & Chandon 1992 Grand Vintage Collection Brut (Champagne); \$NA. Really taut, tight wine, its mature toastiness embedded in a steely, mineral, very dry texture. The acidity is assertive, wonderfully refreshing, so crisp. It may be 18 years old, but it looks likely to age for several years yet. Imported by Moët Hennessy USA. **Cellar Selection.** —R.V.

96 Taittinger 1999 Comtes de Champagne Blanc de Blancs (Champagne); \$180. Intensely Chardonnay, this beautiful wine, named after the ancient rulers of Champagne, is pure mineral, green and citrus fruits, a steely shaft of pure concentration. Now just with a light touch of toast, this still will mature for several years. Imported by Kobrand. **Cellar Selection.** —R.V.

95 Duval-Leroy 1996 Cuvée Femme Brut (Champagne); \$120. As it develops in bottle, this wine retains all its intense acidity. But it has now brought in a toast and yeast character that gives it even greater complexity. It is a wine that is also a Champagne, now in full flow of mineral richness, still with a long way to develop. Imported by Duval-Leroy Imports. **Cellar Selection.** —R.V.

95 Henriot 1998 Millésimé Brut (Champagne); \$95. Just touching maturity, this is a wonderful wine. With intense acidity, yeast, minerality and a beautiful final citrus texture, this is ready to drink but will age for many years. Imported by Henriot Inc. —R.V.

95 Ruinart 1998 Dom Ruinart Brut (Champagne); \$150. Now at its peak of maturity, this is a gorgeous toast and spice flavored Champagne. It has richness, refined acidity, a powerful concentration of yeasty almonds, a taut texture and a final flavor that is straight, true, perfectly balanced. Imported by Moët Hennessy USA. —R.V.

94 Gosset 1998 Celebris Vintage Extra Brut (Champagne); \$150. Dominated by rich Pinot Noir, this is still impressively youthful. It has a sense of power and concentration, with intense white fruit, yeast and just a hint of honey. It could age, but is ready to drink.

Imported by Palm Bay International. **Cellar Selection.** —R.V.

94 Moët & Chandon 1995 Grand Vintage Collection Brut (Champagne); \$NA. A wonderful soft, rich and toasty wine. It reflects the generosity of the 1995 vintage in a mature context, all ripe textures, acidity that has a sweet edge to it, and a lovely final bite of freshness. A delight to drink. Imported by Moët Hennessy USA. —R.V.

94 Philipponnat 1999 Clos des Goisses Brut (Champagne); \$200. This famed single vineyard on its steep slope above Mareuil-sur-Aÿ produces a warm, always elegant wine. This 1999 is softer than some vintages, while still having a power and texture to go with fruit that is now maturing, giving a yeasty final character. Drink now, or age another few years. Imported by Ex-Cellars Wine Agencies, Inc. —R.V.

93 G. H. Mumm 1998 Cuvée R. Lalou Brut (Champagne); \$159. This prestige cuvée from Mumm is maturing well, although still with many years' development left. It has a rich, toasty character, with fresh grapefruit and crisp greengages. Drink this opulent Champagne now, or keep for several years. Imported by Pernod Ricard. —R.V.

93 Mailly Grand Cru 1999 Les Echantillons Brut (Champagne); \$90. A Pinot Noir-dominated Champagne from 70-year-old vines, this is gorgeous, rich and concentrated. It has certainly benefitted from its aging before release. With a small production of 11,000 bottles, this is both serious and impressive. Imported by Total Wine & More. **Cellar Selection.** —R.V.

92 Drappier 1995 Carte d'Or Brut (Champagne); \$NA/1.5 L. With 14 years age, this Champagne shows plenty of beautifully mature fruit. At the same time, its petrol and toast aromas and flavors are balanced by soft richness, a rounded citric and pear flavor and a gentle, ripe aftertaste. Imported by A. Hardy USA. —R.V.

92 Louis Barthélémy 1998 Brut Saphir (Champagne); \$NA/1.5 L. Just approaching toasty maturity, this is a rich and full wine, its white fruits and perfumes floating above yeast, cookie and pine nut flavors. It has a great mouthfeel, a tingling character, acidity and

richness in harmony. Imported by Chancel Père & Fils. —R.V.

91 Charles Ellner 1999 Séduction Brut (Champagne); \$60. In the case of this Champagne's label, it's the women seducing the man. And, yes, this is an elegant Champagne, dominated by crisp Chardonnay acidity, ripe apples and citrus. There is minerality to add to the stylish mix. Imported by Massanois Imports. —R.V.

91 Laurent-Perrier 1999 Brut Millésimé (Champagne); \$69. Smooth, nutty character, with fine maturity along with grapefruit acidity. The Champagne is beautifully elegant, with hints of orange zest, finishing with a balanced toastiness. Imported by Laurent-Perrier U.S. —R.V.

90 Charles Ellner 1999 Brut Prestige (Champagne); \$99. With its rich toasty aroma and ripe creamed apple palate, this is a rich Champagne reflecting the vintage. It is well balanced, with toffee softness and lime juice acidity. Not for aging, but currently very enjoyable. —R.V.

90 Nicolas Feuillatte 1999 Palmes d'Or Brut (Champagne); \$135. This dry, crisp wine is balanced, finely integrated, packed with grapefruit and green apple flavors. There is just a sign of maturing in its toastiness, giving some richness to the otherwise steely texture. A success. Imported by Ste. Michelle Wine Estates. —R.V.

VINTAGE 2000 & LATER

97 Louis Roederer 2004 Cristal Brut (Champagne); \$229. Exceptionally rich and dense, an exceptional wine that reveals itself in layers, from the first fruit attack to the mineral texture and the way it gradually fills the mouth. Selected from old vines, there is a great flavor in this wine, with the promise of many years' aging. Imported by Maisons Marques & Domaines USA. **Cellar Selection.** —R.V.

95 Bollinger 2000 La Grand Année Brut (Champagne); \$150. Full, creamy and soft, this is a rich Champagne, very much a food wine. It has great ripe swathes of peach and pineapple flavors, rounded by toast. While 2000 is not a vintage for aging, this opulent

BUYING GUIDE

Champagne may be the exception. Imported by Terlato Wines International. —R.V.

95 Deutz 2000 L'Amour de Deutz Brut (Champagne); \$NA. Elegance and finesse mark this beautiful wine. It has a tight minerality to go with white fruits, crisp apple juice, a hint of yeast and the purest acidity. With this structure, it should age gracefully for many years. Imported by Maisons Marques & Domaines USA. *Cellar Selection.* —R.V.

95 Louis Roederer 2003 Blanc de Blancs Brut (Champagne); \$69. A rich Chardonnay, full of white fruits and the merest touch of toast and yeast. It is ripe, full in the mouth, but never loses sight of pure elegance. A great success in balancing freshness and richness from this hot vintage. Imported by Maisons Marques & Domaines USA. —R.V.

95 Louis Roederer 2004 Vintage Brut (Champagne); \$67. A great celebration of the fine 2004 vintage, this wine reveals both generosity and a steely resolve. It has a cool elegance as well, giving it a sense of refinement, while still preserving the Roederer richness. The tight acidity holds the wine together and promises long aging. Imported by Maisons Marques & Domaines USA. *Cellar Selection.* —R.V.

95 Moët & Chandon 2000 Dom Pérignon Brut (Champagne); \$NA. Nutty and toasty, this is already maturing. It has a ripe, soft texture, deliciously balanced between acidity, grapefruit and riper peach flavors. It feels sumptuous, rich and certainly ready to drink. Imported by Moët Hennessy USA. —R.V.

94 Moët & Chandon 2002 Grand Vintage Brut (Champagne); \$NA. In acknowledgement of the superior quality of 2002, Moët has released this wine well after the 2003. The decision is fully justified, for this is still young. It is impressive, intensely concentrated, mineral, showing tight grapefruit and apple flavors. Excellent aging potential. Imported by Moët Hennessy USA. —R.V.

94 Taittinger 2004 Brut Millesimé (Champagne); \$80. A wonderfully toasty, yeasty wine, with creamed apple fruits, flavors that show some softness but never deviate from a crisp, steely character. Although this wine is ready to drink, consider keeping for 3–4 years. Imported by Kobrand. *Cellar Selection.* —R.V.

93 Gosset 2000 Grand Millésime Brut (Champagne); \$90. A soft and beautifully ripe Champagne, albeit with a steely, mineral core. It is very much in the Gosset pure, dry style, full of apple and grapefruit acidity to go with a light yeast character. Unlike some 2000s, this should age well. Imported by Palm Bay International. —R.V.

93 Perrier Jouët 2002 Fleur de Champagne Brut (Champagne); \$139. With its distinctive flower bottle, this is an immediately recognizable Champagne, both in its looks and its distinctive Perrier-Jouët elegance. Lively white fruits play with acidity and a tangy backbone of apple skins. Age this for 4–5 years and maybe more. Imported by Pernod Ricard. *Cellar Selection.* —R.V.

93 Philipponnat 2004 Grand Brut Blanc (Champagne); \$80. This wine is on the dry side of Brut. It is rich, at the same time crisp with a delicious creamed pear and apple flavor, lifted even further by pineapple acidity. Congratulations to Philipponnat for indicating disgorgement date and even the dosage on the back label. Imported by Ex-Cellars Wine Agencies, Inc. *Cellar Selection.* —R.V.

92 Drappier 2002 Millésime Exception Brut (Champagne); \$NA. This is a balanced wine, moving easily between rich fruit and a tight mineral and grapefruit texture. There is a hint of toast to give extra weight. Worth aging for several years. Imported by A. Hardy USA. —R.V.

92 Drappier 2004 Grande Sèndrée Brut (Champagne); \$NA. Warm and rich, even if still young, this is a rounded Champagne, full of ripe apple and spice, pink grapefruit, lined with intense acidity. Because it is still so young, it needs several years' aging. Imported by A. Hardy USA. —R.V.

92 Lallier 2002 Millésime Grand Cru (Champagne); \$75. A rich wine, with delicious cream and apple flavors, lifted by fine acidity. It is opulent, packed with apricot and light honey character encased in a dry, mineral framework. Imported by Massanois Imports. —R.V.

92 Laurent-Perrier 2000 Brut Millesimé (Champagne); \$69. A soft, ripe Champagne, as befits the year. Attractive apples, spice and toast go beautifully with sweet

THE WINE ENTHUSIAST BUYING GUIDE

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

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

TASTING METHODOLOGY AND GOALS

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

ABOUT THE SCORES

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

Classic 98–100:	The pinnacle of quality.
Superb 94–97:	A great achievement.
Excellent 90–93:	Highly recommended.
Very Good 87–89:	Often good value; well recommended.
Good 83–86:	Suitable for everyday consumption; often good value.
Acceptable 80–82:	Can be employed in casual, less-critical circumstances.

Wines receiving a rating below 80 are not reviewed.

SPECIAL DESIGNATIONS

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

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

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

SUBMITTING WINES FOR REVIEW

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

LABELS

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

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acidity. It is developing richness and weight, although not likely to age over many years. Imported by Laurent-Perrier U.S. —R.V.

92 Moët & Chandon 2003 Grand Vintage Brut (Champagne); \$NA. With its high percentage of Champagne's third grape, Pinot Meunier, as a result of the growing conditions of 2003, this is a great wine that is developing fast. It has more toast, less fruit, although its richness and weight are finely in balance with a yeasty cookie dough character. Imported by Moët Hennessy USA. —R.V.

92 Nicolas Feuillatte 2003 Cuvée 225 Brut (Champagne); \$90. A wood-fermented wine (in 225 litre barrels), this is naturally a rich Champagne. With the added ripeness of 2003, this is big-hearted, glowing with yellow fruits, the lightest touch of wood and a generous, full and balanced aftertaste. Imported by Ste. Michelle Wine Estates. —R.V.

91 J. Dumangin Fils 2002 Vintage Premier Cru Brut (Champagne); \$72. From a great year for vintage Champagne, this is a fine wine, bringing out minerality, green stone fruits and mouthwatering acidity. It is a wine for aging, so give this impressive Champagne 3–4 years. Imported by Palateur Imports. *Cellar Selection.* —R.V.

91 Louis Roederer 2004 Blanc de Blancs Brut (Champagne); \$69. Somehow this pure Chardonnay wine suffers from the Roederer preference for a higher dosage. With the Blanc de Blancs style, more minerality, something altogether more taut, would be better. That said, there is plenty to enjoy in this rich, full-bodied wine, with apricot as well as citrus flavors. Imported by Maisons Marques & Domaines USA. —R.V.

91 Mailly Grand Cru 2005 L'Intemporelle Brut (Champagne); \$80. Literally timeless, L'Intemporelle is an elegant, almost discreet style. It downplays the rich fruit to present a stylish wine, with citrus highlights over ripe yellow fruit. This 2005 is still young; age for 3–4 years. Imported by Total Wine & More. —R.V.

91 Nicolas Feuillatte 2000 Cuvée Spéciale Millésimé Brut (Champagne); \$75. A soft product of a soft vintage, offering rich fruit as well as a crisp texture. The balance is

just right: green apples and lime to go with yeast and acidity that lies neatly under everything. Age this excellent wine for 2–3 years. Imported by Ste. Michelle Wine Estates. —R.V.

91 Perrier Jouët 2000 Fleur de Champagne Blanc de Blancs Brut (Champagne); \$399. A nutty aroma follows through to the mature palate of this distinguished Blanc de Blancs. It has a good element of acidity, toast and spice and an intense pear and mineral aftertaste. Imported by Pernod Ricard. —R.V.

91 Thienot 2002 Cuvée Garance Blanc de Rouges (Champagne); \$150. This is 100% Pinot Noir, which gives richness to the wine. It is generous, with red apple and pear flavors, still very fresh. An attractive final bite says that it will age. Imported by Dourthe USA. —R.V.

90 Drappier 2000 Grande Sèndrée Brut (Champagne); \$NA. A beautiful ripe, soft and fruity wine. The acidity is sweet, crisp pears and apricots giving a rich character. This is a vintage that is for drinking, not aging. Imported by A. Hardy USA. —R.V.

90 Duval-Leroy 2004 Clos des Bouveries Brut (Champagne); \$65. Sweet, toasty wine, very ripe, full of yellow fruits, touched with almonds and bright white currants. The texture is rich, concentrated, a wine that could well age as it knits its rich fruit and acidity together. Imported by Duval-Leroy Imports. —R.V.

90 Mailly Grand Cru 2004 Millésime Brut (Champagne); \$57. Impressive, but so young, this is a Pinot Noir-dominated vintage, the richness as yet a mere hint in the welter of acidity and fruit. Already, though, this is shaping up to be a structured, tight wine, with great final balance. Imported by Total Wine & More. —R.V.

89 Canard-Duchêne 2004 Brut Millésimé (Champagne); \$60. A lightly fresh-faced wine, with apple and grapefruit flavors balanced with a soft texture. It is easy, attractive, ready to drink. Imported by Dourthe USA. —R.V.

87 Nicolas Feuillatte 2004 Chardonnay Blanc de Blancs Brut (Champagne); \$46. With a sweet dosage, this is soft Blanc de Blancs. Pears, hints of apricots go with

some crisp acidity. It still tastes young and needs time to integrate, but will always be on the sweet side of Brut. Imported by Ste. Michelle Wine Estates. —R.V.

VINTAGE ROSÉ

97 Moët & Chandon 1990 Dom Pérignon Oenothèque Rosé Brut (Champagne); \$NA. This 20-year-old Champagne, just released by Moët, is beautiful, ripe, toasty, the fruit translated into almonds, French toast and searing, intense mature acidity. Disgorged in 2007, it is just now at its peak. Imported by Moët Hennessy USA. —R.V.

95 Laurent-Perrier 1998 Grand Siècle Alexandra Brut Rosé (Champagne); \$390. A wonderful wine that has preserved its freshness while welcoming elements of toasty maturity. It is crisp, definitely on the dry side, with red currants, bright wild strawberries over the purest acidity. It's sure to age over many years, but, if you must, can be drunk now. Imported by Laurent-Perrier U.S. *Cellar Selection.* —R.V.

94 Louis Roederer 2004 Rosé Brut (Champagne); \$67. A beautiful orange pink-colored wine. Young and fresh, it has great depth of raspberry and red fruit flavors as well as a delicious summer fruit brightness and liveliness. A beautiful Champagne, that will repay some bottle aging. Imported by Maisons Marques & Domaines USA. *Editors' Choice.* —R.V.

94 Louis Roederer 2005 Rosé Brut (Champagne); \$67. This is a crisp, high-wire-walking wine, just so poised. Its youthful red fruits, laced with citrus, taste so fresh, with a strawberry bite. At this stage, it is intensely enjoyable as young Champagne, but it does need to age for several years. Imported by Maisons Marques & Domaines USA. —R.V.

94 Moët & Chandon 2000 Dom Pérignon Rosé Brut (Champagne); \$NA. A beautifully balanced wine, with bitter cherries in a core of dry toast. It is already mature, its freshness transformed into a rich texture. Like many rosé Champagnes, this is made for food. Imported by Moët Hennessy USA. —R.V.

BUYING GUIDE

93 Moët & Chandon 2002 Grand Vintage Rosé Brut (Champagne); \$NA. So many great years in Champagne—like 2002—give the most wonderful complexity to the wines. This rosé is no exception, very crisp, shot through with acidity, with delicious mulberry and cherry flavors, just a hint of grilled nuts. It could well age for many years. Imported by Moët Hennessy USA. —R.V.

93 Ruinart 1996 Dom Ruinart Brut Rosé (Champagne); \$295. Pale pink in color, this is stylish rosé. It has the intense acidity of the 1996 vintage, meaning that it still tastes young, crisp, vibrant. The only suggestion that this is 14 years old is in the slight toastiness. But it should go on for many more years. Imported by Moët Hennessy USA. **Cellar Selection.** —R.V.

93 Taittinger 2004 Comtes de Champagne Rosé Brut (Champagne); \$290. A gloriously rich rosé that is full of ripe raspberries that burst in the mouth. It has a tight texture, balanced by a rounded feel. It is still young, of course, and the sweet finish needs time to integrate. Even so, relish the wine now, or wait 3–4 years. Imported by Kobrand. —R.V.

92 Deutz 2006 Rosé Brut (Champagne); \$73. Very young wine, one which is full and rich, but which needs several years to blossom into its full potential. It is in the dry Deutz style, emphasizing acidity and elegance, even though it also has a wonderful ripe intensity. Imported by Maisons Marques & Domaines USA. —R.V.

92 Moët & Chandon 2003 Grand Vintage Rosé Brut (Champagne); \$NA. Onion skin color, showing signs of aromatic toast character, this is a rich, round wine from the hot 2003 vintage. Raspberry fruits are rich and full, lifted by acidity. A great success. Imported by Moët Hennessy USA. —R.V.

92 Perrier Jouët 2002 Fleur de Champagne Rosé Brut (Champagne); \$349. All raspberries and red currants, this is a delicious, instantly approachable wine. It also has a more complex side, intense acidity, a tight texture followed by a juicy fruit character. It is a wine for celebration as well as more serious appreciation. Imported by Pernod Ricard. —R.V.

88 Nicolas Feuillatte 2003 Palmes d'Or Rosé Brut (Champagne); \$200. The Palmes d'Or rosé is always distinctive, not always for the good. However, this 2003 vintage shows well, with ripe cherry flavors, yeast and a soft, open texture. The acidity adds a crisp lemon zest aftertaste. Imported by Ste. Michelle Wine Estates. —R.V.

NONVINTAGE

94 Krug NV Grande Cuvée Brut (Champagne); \$180. With its minimum of six years' bottle aging, this is a beautifully integrated, mature wine. It has a wonderful toast character, layered over sliced pears and ripe acidity. With its complex poise between lightness and richness, this remains an intensely impressive wine. Imported by Moët Hennessy USA. —R.V.

93 Bollinger NV Special Cuvée Brut (Champagne); \$65. Always a rich non-vintage, this latest bottling doesn't disappoint expectations. It has a rich, biscuity character, hints of toast along with pure citrus and fresh apricots. It is ripe, generous, to be drunk with food. Imported by Terlato Wines International. —R.V.

92 Lallier NV Grande Réserve Grand Cru Brut (Champagne); \$55. With a fine sense of maturity, this is rich, toasty, full-bodied and concentrated. It is a Champagne with weight, showing pink grapefruit, melon and green plum flavors inside an intense texture. At the end, acidity combines with a fine toasty flourish. Imported by Massanois Imports. **Editors' Choice.** —R.V.

92 Pascal Doquet NV Grand Cru Le Mesnil sur Oger Blanc de Blancs (Champagne); \$79. A smooth and creamy Champagne, delicious peach and apricot fruits linked by acidity into a harmonious whole. There is a great apple skin texture that gives a bite, just enough to shape the rich aftertaste. Imported by Robert Kacher Imports. —R.V.

92 Ruinart NV Blanc de Blancs Brut (Champagne); \$70. White flower and pear aromas offer a wine that is mineral, nervy, vibrating with the freshest white fruits and lemon juice. It is concentrated, showing strong signs of toast, mature flavors, while keeping great richness. Imported by Moët Hennessy USA. —R.V.

91 G. H. Mumm NV Mumm de Cramant Grand Cru Brut (Champagne); \$75. Once called Crémant de Cramant, this has long been Mumm's signature Champagne. Creamy and soft, it is deliciously balanced, a wine that is both crisp and toasty, with mouthwatering acidity to go with its white currant and green apple flavors. Imported by Pernod Ricard. —R.V.

90 Drappier NV Carte d'Or Brut (Champagne); \$NA. This is rich Champagne, full with a lively mousse and a dominance of Pinot. The acidity and grapefruit flavors are intense, with just a hint of yeastiness. This bottling seems youthful and could age a few months. Imported by A. Hardy USA. —R.V.

90 Drappier NV Quattuor Blanc de Blancs Brut (Champagne); \$70. A blend that includes three ancient Champagne varieties—Arbanne, Petit Meslier and Blanc Vrai—along with Chardonnay. The mix gives a full, perfumed and rich wine, with intense acidity as well as the crispest apple flavor. It is without question a wine for food. Imported by A. Hardy Usa. **Editors' Choice.** —R.V.

90 Drappier NV Zéro Dosage Brut Nature (Champagne); \$NA. Mouth-tingling freshness in a very crisp, dry wine that lives up to its Zéro Dosage moniker. It is all about green apples, freshly sliced lemon, a taut minerality. A few months bottle age will help to bring out a rounder, yeasty character. Imported by A. Hardy USA. —R.V.

90 J. Dumangin Fils NV Premier Cru Blanc de Blancs Premium Brut (Champagne); \$85. Pure, beautifully delicate wine, with mineral striations that line out the grapefruit and citrus flavors. It is certainly very crisp, with a light touch of toast just showing, finishing with a delicious burst of acidity. Imported by Palateur Imports. —R.V.

90 Lallier NV Blanc de Blancs Grand Cru Brut (Champagne); \$75. Beautifully perfumed Champagne, creamy and mineral at the same time. It has the freshest green apple character to go with a delicious rich, full flavor, grapefruit juice and a tight texture. Imported by Massanois Imports. —R.V.

90 Lallier NV Zero Dosage Grand Cru Brut (Champagne); \$84. Very dry,

packed with grapefruit juice flavors. At the same time, this is a tense, serious wine, with a great mineral presence, touch of toast and the potential to age in bottle. It is best with food. Imported by Massanois Imports. —R.V.

90 Perrier Jouët NV Grand Brut (Champagne); \$45. This creamy wine has a distinct mature and toasty character to balance the crisp white fruits and lively acidity. It is on the sweeter end of Brut, which adds richness to this attractive nonvintage. Imported by Pernod Ricard. —R.V.

90 Philipponnat NV Non-Dosé Royale Réserve (Champagne); \$55. With its searing crisp character, this is a wine for food. Very textured, apple skins cut through the citrus acidity, creating a taut, nervy wine, although finishing with a richer, more yeasty character. Imported by Ex-Cellars Wine Agencies, Inc. —R.V.

89 Charles Ellner NV Réserve Brut (Champagne); \$45. Very fresh Champagne, the grapefruit crispness lying over a taut texture of apple skins and tight acidity. There is a great depth of flavor, a wine that has some complexity. The aftertaste has mouthwatering acidity. Imported by Massanois Imports. —R.V.

89 Louis Roederer NV Carte Blanche Extra Dry (Champagne); \$43. A creamy Champagne that is softly sweet, balanced between ripe pear and crisp acidity. It remains tightly textured while also offering an attractive richness. Imported by Maisons Marques & Domaines USA. —R.V.

89 Mailly Grand Cru NV Blanc de Noirs Brut (Champagne); \$52. Rich, as a Blanc de Noirs from Pinot Noir should be, this wine reflects the prime location of Mailly on the north slopes of the Montagne de Reims. It has some tannic structure as well as delicious line in black currant and acidity. It is a young bottling, so keep for several months. Imported by Total Wine & More. —R.V.

89 Mailly Grand Cru NV Demi-Sec (Champagne); \$46. While demi-sec is the description, this is almost as dry as some Brut Champagnes. Its flavors are of walnuts and pear juice along with a fine drive of acidity. This is food Champagne, looking for richer white fish or scal-

lops as a pairing. Imported by Total Wine & More. —R.V.

88 Charles Ellner NV Blanc de Blancs Brut (Champagne); \$50. Soft as well as fresh, this is a rounded Chardonnay, with white peach flavors to go with crisp acidity and a balanced lemon aftertaste. Light and a great apéritif. Imported by Massanois Imports. —R.V.

88 J. Dumangin Fils NV Brut 17 (Champagne); \$48. A rich wine that parades great citrus and pear juice fruits to go with its intense texture of green apple skins and vivid acidity. It tastes very fresh, veering towards dry and could benefit from several months' bottle age. A step up in quality for this producer. Imported by Palateur Imports. —R.V.

88 Louis Barthélémy NV Opale Demi-Sec (Champagne); \$NA. Almonds and toasted bread combine with lemon and honey flavors in this well-balanced off-dry wine. The acidity reminds you this is Champagne, while keeping fruit and softness right up front. Imported by Chancel Père & Fils. —R.V.

88 Louis Barthélémy NV Topaze Zéro Dosage (Champagne); \$NA. Already a touch toasty, this is not as searingly dry as some Zéro Dosage Champagnes. Mind you, there is no doubt it is dry, the crisp apple, grapefruit and taut structure all confirming that. In the end, though, it has weight along with lively acidity. Imported by Chancel Père & Fils. —R.V.

88 Mailly Grand Cru NV Brut Réserve (Champagne); \$46. The Mailly cooperative's standard nonvintage is a well-balanced wine, emphasizing a dry style, while having enough richness to fill the mouth with ripe apple and pear flavors. A success and a great Champagne value. Imported by Total Wine & More. —R.V.

87 Mailly Grand Cru NV Extra Brut (Champagne); \$52. Dry, yes, but this wine is also soft and ripe. It has an attractive toasty character giving power to the midpalate. It's in the finish that the real acidity and dryness show most. Imported by Total Wine & More. —R.V.

NONVINTAGE ROSÉ

94 Krug NV Brut Rosé (Champagne); \$400. The beauty of Krug's rosé is the

sense of bottle age, of that extra richness. That means the wine is not just the sum of its delicious red berry fruits. It's also the way the wine is rounded out, filled with secondary flavors, toast and almonds and a taut minerality. The aftertaste is taut, dry, seamless, complex. Imported by Moët Hennessy USA. —R.V.

91 Bollinger NV Rosé Brut (Champagne); \$100. Beautifully pale in color, this is serious rosé. Its rich and dry character and its red cherry and raspberry flavors are tied together by the finest acidity. Like most Bollinger Champagnes, this needs food. Imported by Terlato Wines International. —R.V.

91 Ruinart NV Brut Rosé (Champagne); \$80. A mature, beautifully balanced wine, with great fresh raspberry and red currant flavors. It is rich, dense, balancing toast, yeast and fresh fruit. With its dry edge, think of this as a food wine. Imported by Moët Hennessy USA. —R.V.

90 J. Dumangin Fils NV Rosé de Saignée Premier Cru Brut (Champagne); \$98. A wine made by using the color from the grape skins rather than the more normal Champagne method of adding red wine to give color to rosé. It gives a deep pink color with a wine that is rich, complex, full of red cherry and raspberry flavors. Imported by Palateur Imports. —R.V.

89 Deutz NV Rosé Brut (Champagne); \$62. Ripe, full raspberry and red cherry flavors on a delicate pink-colored wine. Crisp and dry, this shows an intense and lively acidity along with lime juice intensity. An apéritif style, very fresh. Imported by Maisons Marques & Domaines USA. —R.V.

89 Laurent-Perrier NV Cuvée Rosé Brut (Champagne); \$99. Fresh crushed strawberries combine with a ripe and sweet texture to give a delicious, glowing rosé. It is full in the mouth, with a touch of sweeter fruits, although acidity does give the wine a final lift. Imported by Laurent-Perrier US. —R.V.

89 Perrier Jouët NV Blason Rosé Brut (Champagne); \$85. Dry and fresh, this rosé has attractive minerality and acidity, the raspberry fruit given a wonderful lift by acidity and a tight apple skin texture. It is fruity, while at

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the same time finally crisp. Imported by Pernod Ricard. —R.V.

88 J. Dumangin Fils NV Rosé Premier Cru Brut (Champagne); \$54. Bright, very crisp wine with fresh strawberry flavors. It is dry, light, a grapefruit zest character over the red fruits. This is great apéritif Champagne. Imported by Palateur Imports. —R.V.

88 Lallier NV Rosé Premier Cru Brut (Champagne); \$65. Light pink in color, this is a bone-dry wine, with raspberry as well as an intense apple skin and grapefruit zest texture. A linear wine, very direct in its fruit character. Imported by Massanois Imports. —R.V.

88 Mailly Grand Cru NV Brut Rosé (Champagne); \$57. A soft wine that is full of strawberry fruits to go with a sweet citrus edge. The wine has good acidity, in a light apéritif style with pure final raspberry juice. Imported by Total Wine & More. —R.V.

87 Charles Ellner NV Rosé Brut (Champagne); \$50. On the dry side, the red cherry flavor is concentrated inside acidity and a fruit skin texture. Very fresh, very crisp, for food. Imported by Massanois Imports. —R.V.

87 G. H. Mumm NV Brut Rosé (Champagne); \$75. Attractive strawberry flavors give this bright wine both softness and richness. It has a light bitter cherry character and balancing acidity, while finishing softly. Imported by Pernod Ricard. —R.V.

86 Drappier NV Rosé Brut (Champagne); \$NA. Soft, sweet wine with crushed strawberry flavors that show a high dosage and sweet acidity. It is full-bodied, rich, but not well balanced. Imported by A. Hardy USA. —R.V.

OTHER FRENCH SPARKLING WINE

ALSACE

88 Gustave Lorentz NV Brut (Crémant d'Alsace); \$25. A crisp, apple- and grapefruit-flavored wine, with bright, light acidity and a floral character. The wine has an

attractive mineral edge, great as an apéritif. Imported by Quintessential Wines. —R.V.

88 René Muré NV Cuvée Prestige Brut (Crémant d'Alsace); \$25. Rich, sumptuous wine that shows weight of ripe fruit, a smooth texture and delicious peach and apple flavors. The crisp edge comes from a lemon zest burst, breaking out of the minerality. Imported by Robert Kacher Imports. —R.V.

87 Gustave Lorentz NV Brut Rosé (Crémant d'Alsace); \$25. Based on Pinot Noir, this attractive rosé is packed with wild strawberry and fresh orange zest flavors. It's beautifully clean, crisp, with just a warmer touch in the aftertaste. Imported by Quintessential Wines. —R.V.

87 Lucien Albrecht NV Brut Rosé (Crémant d'Alsace); \$23. From 100% Pinot Noir, here is a delicious, crisp, wild raspberry- and mulberry-flavored wine. The acidity shines through the fruit skin texture, giving a mouthtingling feel. Imported by Pasternak Wine Imports. —R.V.

86 Lucien Albrecht NV Brut Blanc de Blancs (Crémant d'Alsace); \$23. A creamed pear wine, with an attractive tang of orange zest. It is light, bright, vibrant, very fruity. The acidity does seem to be excessive, so give this wine a few months in bottle. Imported by Pasternak Wine Imports. —R.V.

86 René Muré NV Brut (Crémant d'Alsace); \$19. Very soft, ripe, this is a gentle sparkler. White fruits dominate along with crushed almond, layered acidity and a bone-dry perfumed aftertaste. Imported by Robert Kacher Imports. —R.V.

LOIRE

90 Chateau Moncontour 2008 Cuvée Prédilection (Vouvray); \$19. A sumptuous wine, creamy and nutty, full of ripe apples, touched by yeast. It is fresh and rich, very dry, a toasty character yielding to final crisp, clean acidity. Imported by USA Wine West. *Editors' Choice.* —R.V.

88 Chateau Moncontour NV Brut (Montlouis-sur-Loire); \$14. A creamy-textured wine, with soft nuts, star fruit

and rambutan flavors, along with some good crisp acidity. There is a fine texture here, giving a wine that is already delicious to drink. Imported by USA Wine West. —R.V.

88 Couly-Dutheil NV Brut de Franc (Vin Mousseux); \$30. A richer version of a Saumur sparkling wine, this is soft, ripe and creamy. The dosage feels on the sweet side, although it is labeled Brut. There is just a touch of fruit skin texture to give it a firm edge, but there is also great final acidity. Imported by Frank-Lin International. —R.V.

87 Chateau Moncontour NV Tête de Cuvée Brut (Touraine); \$NA. Bright, apply acidity with just an edge of nuttiness gives a bone-dry, very fresh wine, textured with green herbs and lemon zest. To enjoy now. Imported by USA Wine West. —R.V.

86 Hospices de Saumur NV La Rosée Brut (Vin Mousseux); \$22. Fresh raspberry-flavored sparkling wine, with vivid acidity but also some softness. It has a bright, crisp texture, lively and refreshing. The wine comes from a small parcel next to the Hospices de Saumur. Imported by Bourgeois Family Selections. —R.V.

83 Domaine de Vaugondy NV Brut (Vouvray); \$15. Biting acidity, tight with a tart edge, give this wine a seriously crisp character. It is all sharp edges, with grapefruit intensity and a final almond character. Imported by European Wine Imports. —R.V.

OTHER REGIONS

88 Domaine Sarrabelle NV Méthode Gaillacoise (Gaillac); \$12. Lightly sparkling, just off-dry wine, deliciously appley and fresh. There is a lovely edge of crisp, crunchy fruit along with a gentle acidity. Low in alcohol, this is a great apéritif, made by the single fermentation Gaillac method. Imported by Jon-David Headrick Selections. —R.V.

83 Domaine du Grand Cros NV Le Grand Cros Rosé (Vin Mousseux); \$17. Full and fat mousse over peachy fruit, acidity and an earthy character. This sparkling wine from Provence finishes with some crushed strawberry sweetness. Imported by The Barter House. —R.V.

PIEDMONT RED WINES

BAROLO

97 Rivetto 2004 Riserva (Barolo); \$NA. Wow: simply wonderful! This wine will blow you away on all levels. The intensity, the quality of the mouthfeel, the fine focus of the fruit and spice aromas and its long persistency are stratospheric. It's a dark, brooding expression of Nebbiolo with enough of an aromatic motor to carry it forward many years, if not decades of cellar aging. The Rivetto family has produced a masterpiece. Imported by Vintage Imports, Inc. **Cellar Selection.** —M.L.

97 Vietti 2006 Brunate (Barolo); \$130. Bravo! The Brunate cru has awarded Vietti with a stellar product: a wine that is unusually dark and plush with impressive intensity and crafted aromas of black fruit, spice, earth, licorice, balsam and gianduia chocolate-hazelnut spread. The soft, velvety texture is seductively delicious and the wine will age many long, glorious years. Imported by Dalla Terra Winery Direct. **Cellar Selection.** —M.L.

96 Luciano Sandrone 2006 Cannubi Boschis (Barolo); \$150. It's hard to beat the quality achieved by this spectacular wine. Luciano Sandrone's Barolo from the Cannubi Boschis cru is creamy, rich, opulent and sophisticated. It oozes flavors of espresso, ripe cherry, cassis, cola and licorice. In the mouth, it is extraordinarily bright and generous and the seamless finish can be counted in long minutes. And, the best news is: this wine will only improve with time. Imported by Vintus LLC. **Cellar Selection.** —M.L.

96 Poderi Luigi Einaudi 2006 Costa Grimaldi (Barolo); \$70. Costa Grimaldi is a spectacular wine that surprises with every sip thanks to its intensity and the extraordinary quality of its mouthfeel. Initially, the wine is soft and yielding with tones of red cherry, chocolate, cola, licorice and mineral. It grows even more opulent and velvety in the mouth thanks to its fine texture and tannins. Keep this wine in your cellar ten years plus. Imported by Empson (USA) Ltd. **Cellar Selection.** —M.L.

95 Azelia 2006 San Rocco (Barolo); \$NA. Azelia's San Rocco Barolo is a stupendous wine with impressive intensity and generous aromas of wild berries, licorice, white truffle, menthol, spice, tar and leather. The tannins are firm and polished and the wine fades slowly leaving a pretty vanilla aftertaste. Hold until 2018. A Marc de Grazia selection; various American importers. **Editors' Choice.** —M.L.

95 Cantina Bartolo Mascarello 2006 Barolo; \$NA. Cantina Bartolo Mascarello, one of the feistiest and most historic estates in the Langhe, has crafted an amazing Barolo in 2006 that delivers both elegance and opulence. It's a richly layered and complex wine with a natural fullness and generosity that really sits well on the palate. Cellar this wine 10 years or more. Imported by Robert Chadderdon Selections. **Cellar Selection.** —M.L.

95 Ceretto 2005 Bricco Rocche Bricco Rocche (Barolo); \$252. Nebbiolo grapes, with their naturally elegant aromas of black currant and licorice, speak loudly. So does winery magic: Tones of spice, leather, cola and tobacco are derived from 24 months of careful oak aging. The tannins are fine and tight and this wine will age ten years or more. Imported by Wilson Daniels Ltd. **Cellar Selection.** —M.L.

95 Cordero di Montezemolo 2006 Bricco Gattera (Barolo); \$NA. Here's a truly astonishing Barolo (from the Bricco Gattera cru) that epitomizes the "big boy" style that represents one of two dominant winemaking philosophies in the Langhe. This is an exuberant wine with thickly extracted notes of coffee bean, blackberry, leather and savory layers of black pepper. The wine is rich, smooth and velvety and will appeal less to Nebbiolo traditionalists. Imported by Omniwines Distribution. —M.L.

95 Enzo Boglietti 2004 Riserva (Barolo); \$NA. This is a truly awesome Barolo Riserva from the La Morra subzone with gorgeous intensity and purity. The wine is flush with balsam, cola, cherry, mineral, spice and some earthy overtones. The quality of the fruit is very evident in the mouth. Lingering tones of leather and tobacco are folded within the long lasting finish. Put this bottle aside. Imported by Cutting Edge Selections. **Cellar Selection.** —M.L.

95 Eugenio Bocchino 2006 La Serra (Barolo); \$100. From a simpatico, fam-

ily-run winery comes this benchmark Barolo. La Serra speaks highly of the Langhe territory and of winemaking innovation. Aromas here include cherry cola, vanilla bean, leather and crushed granite stone. The wine is determined and direct with a savory note of cured meat on the long finish. Drink after 2017. Imported by Small Vineyards LLC. —M.L.

95 Josetta Saffirio 2006 Persiera (Barolo); \$70. With a strong line of women at the helm of the winery, Josetta Saffirio is now run by the young Sara Vezza. Her Barolo Persiera is particularly impressive thanks to its bold, pulsing fruit nuances and the refined nature of its spice, tobacco and cola elements. The wine finishes with long floral flavors and polished tannins. Imported by North Berkeley Imports. **Editors' Choice.** —M.L.

95 Marchesi di Barolo 2006 Coste di Rose (Barolo); \$NA. One of the best Barolos of the year, Coste di Rose is a natural beauty with gorgeous, thick extraction and perfectly balanced aromas of blueberries, violets, almond paste, sweet spice and root beer. The wine shows impressive heft and density, yet it is elegant and polished at the same time with finely textured tannins. Cellar this delightful wine ten years or more. Imported by Wine Wave. **Cellar Selection.** —M.L.

95 Massolino 2006 Parafada (Barolo); \$94. Massolino's Parafada Barolo is a stunningly beautiful wine with bold, confident aromas of black fruit, tobacco, cigar box, cherry cola, clove, nutmeg and vanilla bean. The mouthfeel is bright, lively, velvety and, generally speaking, the 2006 vintage represents a big jump over 2005. Imported by Domaine Select Wine Estates. —M.L.

95 Podere Rocche dei Manzoni 2006 Vigna Cappella di Santo Stefano (Barolo); \$NA. This gorgeous Barolo opens with plush, dark concentration and deep aromatic layers of smoked beef, mineral, cola, mesquite wood, blackberry and exotic spice. This dark, masculine expression also makes a lasting impression in the mouth thanks to the richness and persistency of the finish. Imported by Robert Chadderdon Selections. **Cellar Selection.** —M.L.

95 Vietti 2006 Rocche (Barolo); \$130. Rocche Barolo is another homerun for

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Vietti. You'll fall in love with the wine's rich intensity and the ensuing complexity that becomes apparent as the wine spends more time in the glass. Thanks to a continuing evolution, you'll recognize aromas of wild berry, smoke, crushed stone, licorice, cola and mesquite. The tannins are silky and smooth. Hold ten years or more. Imported by Dalla Terra Winery Direct. **Cellar Selection.** —M.L.

94 Brezza 2006 Cannubi (Barolo); \$NA. Here's yet another extraordinary wine from the famed Cannubi cru of Barolo. In this expression from the Brezza family, you'll be rewarded with bright aromas of forest berry, licorice, earth, leather and cola. The wine is intense, generous and very elegant. Pair it with chicken in morel mushroom sauce. Imported by Admiralty Beverage. **Cellar Selection.** —M.L.

94 Bric Cenciurio 2006 Coste di Rose (Barolo); \$NA. Here's another Barolo from the Coste di Rose cru that will blow your mind. This is a big, bold expression of Nebbiolo with thick and longlasting aromas backed by impressive intensity in the mouth. Espresso bean, cherry, spice, leather and licorice all make an appearance and the finish can be counted in many long, long delicious minutes. Imported by Italia Wine Imports. —M.L.

94 Cascina Ballarin 2004 Bricco Rocca Riserva Tistot (Barolo); \$NA. Impressive on so many levels, this vineyard designate Riserva Barolo shows excellent aromatic intensity and purity. Black cherry, plum, smoke, spice, asphalt, root beer and black tar are evident elements of the bouquet. The mouthfeel is full, firm and generous with a lingering vanilla fade. Imported by Ideal Wine and Spirits Co. Inc. —M.L.

94 Castello di Verduno 2004 Monvigliero Riserva (Barolo); \$90. Although this Riserva already has six years of age, it opens with surprisingly bright and youthful tones of cherry, blackberry and cassis. Those fruit aromas are folded within evident oak-driven aromas of spice and vanilla. The mouthfeel is firm, polished and this Barolo should age more years in the bottle. Imported by Oliver McCrum Wines. —M.L.

94 Ceretto 2005 Bricco Rocche Brunate (Barolo); \$88. Thanks to its dense clay soils, the Brunate cru delivers wines

with high color saturation and aromatic caliber. This Barolo offers layers of black fruit, plum, spice, tobacco, cola and dark chocolate. The wine is firm and finely textured with power, dimension and personality on the long finish. Imported by Wilson Daniels Ltd. **Cellar Selection.** —M.L.

94 Claudio Alario 2006 Riva (Barolo); \$NA. Barolo Riva is a fantastic wine with enormous personality and charm. At the outset, the wine appears modern and bold with determined aromas of black fruit and spice. But wait a second and the wine will surprise you with its sassy complexity and finesse. Give it 10 more years of cellar aging. A Marc de Grazia selection; various American importers. **Editors' Choice.** —M.L.

94 Claudio Alario 2006 Sorano (Barolo); \$NA. Barolo Sorano (from the Serralunga d'Alba area) is an impressive wine with big color and extraction followed by aromas of cherry liqueur, spice, vanilla, clove and ginger. The wine is chewy and succulent in the mouth with firm tannins that will soften with time. A Marc de Grazia selection; various American importers. —M.L.

94 Cordero di Montezemolo 2006 Enrico VI (Barolo); \$NA. Enrico VI is an elegant and unique expression of Nebbiolo with impressive finesse and sophistication. Save this bottle for an important occasion and cellar age the wine five to 10 more years at a minimum. Aromas include coffee, tar, dried tobacco, leather and delicate forest fruit. There are hints of vanilla and toast on the close that will soften with time. Imported by Omniwines Distribution. —M.L.

94 Elvio Cagno 2006 Cascina Nuova (Barolo); \$45. Wow, what a wonderful wine, delivering rich notes of black fruit, vanilla, cherry and spice. But the aromas are in no way obvious. In fact, this is an ethereal and elegant wine that pays attention to the little details, like the light shadings of polished stone and violets that liven up the long finish. Drink after 2018. Imported by Vias Imports. **Cellar Selection.** —M.L.

94 Enzo Boglietti 2006 Fossati (Barolo); \$NA. The Barolo Fossati from La Morra opens with huge intensity and determined aromas of black cherry, tobacco, licorice, mesquite wood and crushed mineral. What really sets this wine apart is the immediacy and confident delivery of its aromas. That same

self-awareness transfers to the mouth, where the wine is long, satisfying and rich. Imported by Cutting Edge Selections. —M.L.

94 Gianfranco Alessandria 2006 San Giovanni (Barolo); \$NA. Here's a fantastic addition to your cellar collection of Barolos. Gianfranco Alessandria's San Giovanni Barolo is at the top of its class. The wine is elegant and ethereal with dark, spicy concentration and loads of pulpy fruit, licorice, ginger, cola and leather. Open this bottle in ten years or so. Imported by T. Edward Wines Ltd. —M.L.

94 Gianni Gagliardo 2006 Cannubi (Barolo); \$125. A Barolo superstar on the rise—keep a close watch on the wines of Gianni Gagliardo and family. This expression from the prized Cannubi cru offers impressive intensity and personality with enticing aromas of black fruit, cola, root beer, cured beef, cedar and white truffle. The wine is ethereal and elegant but the tannic touch is firm enough to promise a long cellar future ahead. Imported by Enotec Imports, Inc. **Cellar Selection.** —M.L.

94 Gianni Voerzio 2006 La Serra (Barolo); \$100. Barolo La Serra from Gianni Voerzio would make a perfect companion to pulled pork smoked over hardwood charcoal. There's a sassy spice element here backed by plush layers of blueberry, blackberry and plum. The tannins are still on the young, astringent side; give this wine some time to unwind in the cellar. Imported by BelVino LLC. —M.L.

94 Giuseppe Rinaldi 2006 Cannubi San Lorenzo Ravera (Barolo); \$95. With fruit sourced from some of Barolo's best vineyard crus, this beautiful wine offers fullness, character and longevity. Textbook Nebbiolo aromas include wild berry, blue flower, white pepper, cola and tar. The mouthfeel is spicy, fresh and well structured. Pair this wine with steak au poivre (in 5–10 years or so). Imported by Vinifera Imports. —M.L.

94 Luigi Pira 2006 Vigna Marenca (Barolo); \$65. The Luigi Pira estate delivers a knockout Barolo (from the Marenca vineyard in Serralunga d'Alba) with impressive integrity of fruit, vibrant cherry and blackberry backed by warming aromas of chocolate and spice. The wine is velvety-rich and opulent in the mouth. Drink after 2018. Imported by Michael Skurnik Wines. **Cellar Selection.** —M.L.

94 Marchesi di Barolo 2006 Sarmassa (Barolo); \$NA. Here's an excellent measuring stick with which to gauge some of the world's best Nebbiolo-based wines. This bright Barolo from the Sarmassa cru delivers textbook aromatic nuances of small berry, cinnamon, dried currants, licorice and balsam freshness. Tight tannins and a fine texture will enable longevity. Cellar this wine ten years or more. Imported by Wine Wave. —M.L.

94 Massolino 2006 Margheria (Barolo); \$94. This is a rich and beautifully extracted Barolo that opens with concentrated aromas of toasted hazelnut, chocolate fudge, cherry, licorice and exotic spice. In the mouth, it offers firm, finely textured tannins and a powerful but delicious finish. Imported by Domaine Select Wine Estates. —M.L.

94 Pio Cesare 2006 Ornato (Barolo); \$109. Barolo Ornato is a beautiful wine: rich in flavor, intensity and personality. You can taste the quality of the fruit here thanks to the pristine notes of cherry, wild berry, spice and ginger that emerge from the nose. Oak notes of vanilla and cinnamon are nicely integrated and folded within the wine's dense, supple texture. Imported by Maisons Marques & Domaines USA. —M.L.

94 Poderi Luigi Einaudi 2006 Nei Cannubi (Barolo); \$100. Nei Cannubi from Poderi Einaudi is textbook Barolo; the kind of wine you can bank on for an elegant and enlightening drinking experience. You see that, here, all the elements are perfectly in place and stacked for maximum pleasure. Aromas of blue flower, berry and shaved mineral build in intensity and the wine is determined and persistent on the palate. Imported by Empson (USA) Ltd. —M.L.

94 Renato Ratti 2006 Marcenasco (Barolo); \$50. Dark in color with a modern style and velvety extraction, the gorgeous Marcenasco expression of Barolo is redolent of blackberries, cherries, spice, leather and tobacco. The finish is long and elegant but not without power and determination. Keep this wine cellared for ten years plus. Imported by Dreyfus, Ashby & Co. —M.L.

94 Rivetto 2006 Serralunga (Barolo); \$NA. Rivetto has delivered an impressive portfolio this year with vineyard-designate

Barolos and a stellar Riserva. This Serralunga expression is ripe with generous, velvety fruit tones and loads of mineral, cola and spice. The wine shows balance and personality and definitely has the qualities needed for long aging. Imported by Vintage Imports, Inc. —M.L.

94 Schiavenza 2004 Broglio Riserva (Barolo); \$NA. Riserva Broglio Barolo from Schiavenza opens with generous tones of red berry fruit, spice, vanilla, polished mineral, licorice and cola. It is already showing some delicate tertiary aromas and, in the mouth, you can feel the fine texture of the tannins. Hold five more years. —M.L.

94 Schiavenza 2004 Prapò Riserva (Barolo); \$NA. Riserva Barolo Prapò delivers modern oak tones followed by nice integrity of fruit and well-integrated aromas of spice, prune, blackberry and cola. The mouthfeel is very velvety and smooth and the tannins show an extreme fine grain quality. Hold ten years or more. —M.L.

94 Silvio Grasso 2006 Ciabot Manzoni (Barolo); \$NA. Barolo Ciabot Manzoni is a tremendous wine with rich notes of cherry, vanilla and chocolate. Yes, it's a bold, modern wine but there's no denying the quality and beauty here. Give it more time in the cellar to allow those oak notes to integrate and give more prominence to the sophisticated aromas of wild berries, mineral, cola and licorice that are generously present. A Marc de Grazia selection; various American importers. *Cellar Selection.* —M.L.

94 Silvio Grasso 2006 Bricco Luciani (Barolo); \$NA. Here's a wine that shows careful craftsmanship in both the vineyard and the winery. Silvio Grasso's Barolo Bricco Luciani is a bold and expertly extracted wine with heft and determination that is in no way overdone. You'll identify aromas of spice, smoke, cinnamon and clove lavished over a bright core of blackberry and plum. The wine also offers interesting earthy tones, with smoked or cured meat nuances. A Marc de Grazia selection; various American importers. —M.L.

94 Tenuta Duecorti 2006 Due Corti (Barolo); \$NA. This is an impressive Barolo by a wine company (with superstar consulting enologist Carlo Ferrini at the head of winemaking) that is relatively new to the scene. Due Corti proves this winery knows what it's

doing. Aromas of red rose, violet and exotic spice come forward immediately. Indeed, this is an extremely floral and perfumed wine with silky, smooth tannins. *Editors' Choice.* —M.L.

94 Viberti 2006 Rocchettevino (Barolo); \$NA. Here's a super-modern, *piacione* (roughly translated from the Italian as "no one can resist it") wine with deep layers of vanilla, toast, roasted espresso bean, blackberry, balsam notes, smoke, spice and tar. The wine is thick and soft in the mouth and almost ready to drink now (or in five years). The finish is delicious with a long cherry-flavored fade. —M.L.

93 Agostino Bosco 2006 La Serra (Barolo); \$50. This Barolo from the La Serra vineyard in La Morra really hits all the right marks. The wine is rich, complex and enticing with aromas of cherry, mesquite, herbs, tar, earth and cassis. It's elegant and traditional with a bright tonic finish. What's really nice is that the wine is not too big. It's just right. Imported by Tanaro River Imports LLC. —M.L.

93 Andrea Oberto 2006 Vigneto Rocche (Barolo); \$NA. Here's a dark, thick expression of Nebbiolo that is enhanced by modern touches of vanilla, espresso bean and sweet Christmas spice. There are background notes here of smoked ham, prune and earth and this beautiful wine radiates elegance and complexity. Pair it with gourmet Kobe beef. Imported by Chambers & Chambers. —M.L.

93 Aurelio Settimo 2006 Rocche (Barolo); \$NA. Barolo Rocche scored considerably higher than Aurelio Settimo's base Barolo this year and would make a wonderful addition to your cellar. This is a gorgeous wine with impressive intensity and penetrating aromas of balsam, chopped mint, forest berry, underbrush and white mushroom. It's elegant and compact in the mouth with a long, firm finish. Imported by Masciarelli Wine Co. —M.L.

93 Bel Colle 2004 Monvigliero Riserva (Barolo); \$69. This is a very impressive Riserva that shows personality and longevity. Tar, asphalt and licorice notes are enhanced by delicate tones of balsam, cola and candied orange peel. In the mouth, this Barolo is a real charmer: the fullness and long persistency will win you over. Drink after 2015. Imported by Aventine Hill LLC. —M.L.

93 Boroli 2006 Cerequio (Barolo); \$80. Boroli is a young and dynamic winery to watch. This Barolo from the gorgeous Cerequio cru is ripe with traditional aromas of wild berry, leather, soft spice and white truffle. Extra character is added by slightly oddball aromas of carrot and smoked ham that work overall to the wine's favor. Drink after 2015. Imported by Dalla Terra Winery Direct. —M.L.

93 Brezza 2006 Bricco Sarmassa (Barolo); \$NA. Thanks to its plush and velvety nature, this is a wine with universal appeal. Barolo Bricco Sarmassa opens in big fashion with aromas of black cherry, Indian spice, vanilla and dark espresso bean. It's tight and tannic in the mouth but, fundamentally, the wine's saving grace is that it's never too extracted or overblown. Imported by Admiralty Beverage. —M.L.

93 Cascina Adelaide 2006 Preda (Barolo); \$88. Cascina Adelaide always stands out in a crowd of Barolos thanks to the overall intensity of its Nebbiolo characteristics. Thanks to careful winemaking techniques, Preda takes that extra step: the fruit is brighter here and the spice notes are noticeably more piquant. You'll also taste fine mineral notes, violets and green olive. Imported by Tesori Wines. —M.L.

93 Castello di Verduno 2006 Massara (Barolo); \$75. Massara is textbook Barolo with elegant and ethereal layers of wild berry fruit, underbrush, hazelnut, cola, tar and licorice. The finish is characterized by bright acidity and fine, polished tannins. Pair this wine with any dish that includes wild mushrooms or truffles. Imported by Oliver McCrum Wines. —M.L.

93 Cavallotto 2006 Bricco Boschis (Barolo); \$NA. From the Bricco Boschis cru in Castiglione Falletto, this luminous Barolo offers pretty elements of wild berry, forest floor, leather, tar, licorice and eucalyptus. There's loads of power and personality here and the mouthfeel is elegant and long lasting. Drink after 2018. —M.L.

93 Ceretto 2005 Bricco Rocche Prapó (Barolo); \$88. From iron-rich soils, this expression of Barolo offers elegant mineral tones and slate backed by plump aromas of blackberry, currant, cola, leather, spice and smoked cedar wood. There's also an attractive floral note at the

back. The wine offers notably fine textured tannins, with a smooth and polished feel. Imported by Wilson Daniels Ltd. —M.L.

93 Ciabot Berton 2006 Ciabot Berton (Barolo); \$80. This is a lovely Barolo with oak-driven aromas of vanilla and sweet spice between delicate layers of rose, tar and wild berry. There's plenty of tasty pulp and substance backed by tight tannins that will undoubtedly relax with more time in the bottle. Cellar age this wine five to ten more years. Imported by Superior Wines LLC. —M.L.

93 Damilano 2006 Brunate (Barolo); \$NA. The beautiful Brunate cru is known for heavier, darker expressions of Nebbiolo and this wine does a wonderful job of showing off its territorial traits. Aromas here include coffee, hazelnut, wild berries, tar, leather and exotic spice. It's balanced and firm and will surely evolve favorably over the next decade. Imported by Vias Imports. —M.L.

93 E. Pira e Figli (Chiara Boschis) 2006 Cannubi (Barolo); \$95. Here is a beautifully extracted and voluptuous Barolo from the Cannubi cru that would pair with tender veal shank, slow cooked until falling off the bone. Black cherry, spice, root beer and fragrant earthy tones all appear on the nose and the wine closes with tight, firm structure. Cellar age ten years or more. Imported by Indigenous Selections. —M.L.

93 Enzo Boglietti 2006 Case Nere (Barolo); \$NA. Barolo Case Nere from La Morra opens with extremely dark and concentrated extraction followed by young oak-related aromas of spice, leather and tobacco. But, thanks to the bright fruit notes at the back—blueberry, cassis and pomegranate—those toasted notes will fade further into the background as the wine evolves in time. Imported by Cutting Edge Selections. —M.L.

93 Francesco Sobrero 2006 Ciabot Tanasio (Barolo); \$NA. Francesco Sobrero is an up and coming wine star in the Italian media. Indeed, this is a fascinating wine that offers a unique glimpse into Barolo typicity. This is a wine with a holistic approach: the spice and fruit notes are well integrated and the wine offers aged aromas of earth, leather and root beer. It's definitely worth a peek. —M.L.

93 Fratelli Alessandria 2006 Monvigliero (Barolo); \$67. Fratelli Alessandria's flagship Barolo opens with pretty spice nuances followed by cherry, blueberry and loads of buoyant fruit. This is a happy, cheerful wine with a vertical lift and tonic notes of eucalyptus and root beer. The tannins are drying and fine. Drink after 2018. Imported by Villa Italia. —M.L.

93 Fratelli Casetta 2004 Riserva (Barolo); \$NA. This Riserva Barolo from the La Morra subzone opens with a surprisingly bright and concentrated color, followed by rich aromas of cherry, black fruit, exotic spice and smoke. There are dusty layers of crushed stone as well and the wine fades long with polished tannins. Imported by Sober LLC. —M.L.

93 Giacosa Fratelli 2006 Vigna Mandorlo (Barolo); \$75. Sassy spice and piquant touches of furniture wax, root beer, wild berries, licorice and white truffle open the nose of this vineyard-designate Barolo. In general, the spice aromas stand out most and the wine is squeaky-polished in the mouth. Drink after 2015. Imported by Bedford International. —M.L.

93 Gianfranco Alessandria 2006 (Barolo); \$NA. This is a lovely wine with a generous disposition and intense aromas of forest fruit, nutmeg, clove, anise seed and licorice. In the mouth, it boasts a broad, round feel with a long, velvety finish. Pair this wine with thin slices of grilled steak topped with porcini mushrooms. Imported by T. Edward Wines Ltd. —M.L.

93 Gianni Gagliardo 2006 Serre (Barolo); \$75. Gianni Gagliardo's Barolo Serre is an impressively delicate wine with layers of wild berry, red rose, pressed violets, smoke and mineral. The mouthfeel is fresh, tannic, clean and very long lasting. This classic expression of Nebbiolo shows the best qualities of this noble Italian variety. Imported by Enotec Imports, Inc. —M.L.

93 Giovanni Rosso 2006 Cerretta (Barolo); \$55. Barolo Cerretta is a cheerful and friendly wine with defined aromas of cherry, wild berry, dusty mineral, bright spice, root beer and ground ginger. This wine is built to last and will age gracefully ten years or more. Imported by Massanois Imports. —M.L.

93 Grimaldi Bruna 2006 Badarina (Barolo); \$NA. Barolo Badarina is a soft, velvety wine with loads of spice, vanilla and clove. Those pleasurable aromas are woven between lively notes of fresh fruit and crushed mineral. The wine is supple, rich and opulent on the close. Cellar it five years or more. Imported by Premium Brands. —M.L.

93 Josetta Saffirio 2004 Persiera Riserva (Barolo); \$140. This beautiful Riserva Barolo from the Josetta Saffirio winery opens with ripe aromas of blackberry and cassis syrup followed by nicely evolved tones of espresso, root beer, licorice and spice. The wine offers depth and personality with a very smooth, silky quality in the mouth. Imported by North Berkeley Imports. —M.L.

93 Josetta Saffirio 2006 (Barolo); \$35. Josetta Saffirio delivers an impressive portfolio of wines that show the fruits of careful work in the vineyard and the winery. This base Barolo from the Monforte d'Alba area opens with lush fruit tones of cherry, wild berries, cassis and spice. What sets this expression apart is the attractive contrast between the wine's juicy nose and its drying mouthfeel. Imported by North Berkeley Imports. —M.L.

93 Luciano Sandrone 2006 Le Vigne (Barolo); \$155. Le Vigne is an evolved and elegant wine with dark fruit backed by smoke, spice and toasted nut. It's a full, ripe, plump and linear wine with a dense, succulent close and sophisticated accents of mineral and cola on the long, long finish. Overall, this Barolo is beautiful and special. Imported by Vintus LLC. —M.L.

93 Marcarini 2006 Brunate (Barolo); \$60. This is a lovely, layered wine with unusual (but seductive) aromas of cassis, wild berry, violet, chopped mint, pine nut, iron, clove and savory black pepper. The finish is tight and dusty with finely textured tannins that fade after a long while. Drink after 2015. Imported by Empson (USA) Ltd. —M.L.

93 Mario Marengo 2006 Brunate (Barolo); \$60. This is a loaded wine, ripe with aromas of cherry cola, chopped herbs, white chocolate, blackberry and cassis. The aromatic presentation is never overpowering and the wine is in fact delicate and elegant with finely tuned finesse. Pair this Barolo with truffle-

stuffed veal roast. Imported by Michael Skurnik Wines. —M.L.

93 Marziano Abbona 2006 Terlo Ravera (Barolo); \$56. This is a gorgeous Barolo with a full and elegant personality backed by big berry notes, spice, cherry, pressed violets and cola. The finish is long and extremely well balanced on a solid base of tannin and natural acidity. Drink this beauty after 2015. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd. —M.L.

93 Massolino 2004 Vigna Rionda Riserva (Barolo); \$134. The quality and persistency of the fruit is impressive. This Riserva Barolo is extremely generous in terms of its cherry, blackberry, cola and exotic spice aromas. The wine sports fine texture and smooth flavors of plum and leather on the close. Imported by Domaine Select Wine Estates. —M.L.

93 Mauro Molino 2006 Vigna Gancia (Barolo); \$NA. Loaded with fresh oak tones (that will integrate as the wine evolves in time), this is a modern Barolo with good pulp and loads of aromatic intensity. Mesquite wood, vanilla, spice and black fruit set the stage. The wine is ripe with density and structure and will easily age 10 years plus. A Marc de Grazia selection; various American importers. —M.L.

93 Michele Chiarlo 2006 Cerequio (Barolo); \$100. This edition of the prized Cerequio Barolo by Michele Chiarlo flaunts its own unique personality with immediate aromas of white cherry, red apple, tar, licorice powder and root beer. It's a polished, squeaky-clean wine with a long finish that seems more buoyant and vertical compared to past vintages. Imported by Kobrand. —M.L.

93 Podere Rocche dei Manzoni 2006 Big d'Big (Barolo); \$NA. Here's a Barolo with a sense of humor: the whimsically named Big d'Big does indeed offer big and bold aromas of red fruit, spice, plum with elegant tones of licorice and cola. The wine ends with sweet fruit flavors and smooth tannins. Very nice. Imported by Robert Chadderdon Selections. —M.L.

93 Podere Ruggeri Corsini 2006 Corsini (Barolo); \$NA. Corsini is a thickly extracted and velvety Barolo that opens with a deep dark color and confident aromas of Indian spice, cigar box, leather, blackberry,

maraschino cherry and plum. The solid but still astringent mouthfeel reveals that this wine still needs more time to age. Imported by Panebianco. —M.L.

93 Poderi Aldo Conterno 2006 Colonello (Barolo); \$175. Barolo Colonello is a determined, confident wine with a rich, succulent style and ripe aromas of blackberry, spice, sweet vanilla and polished black stone. The chewy mouthfeel also shows a precise stylistic choice and "the colonel" is richly opulent and enduring on the finish. Imported by The Sorting Table. —M.L.

93 Rocche Costamagna 2006 Rocche dell'Annunziata (Barolo); \$NA. This beautifully pristine Barolo opens with ethereal notes of wild berries, exotic spice, leather, tobacco and tar. The wine offers a complex aromatic embroidery with an elegant and fine texture in the mouth and slowly evolving tannins. Hold this wine five to 10 years. Imported by Laird & Company. —M.L.

93 Schiavenza 2006 Prapò (Barolo); \$NA. This Barolo enjoys broad appeal thanks to its forthcoming bouquet of ripe forest fruit, chocolate and espresso bean. The wine offers loads of exotic spice, leather, tobacco and chewy tar. In the mouth, it is much more elegant and compact than you'd expect. Imported by David Bowler Wine. —M.L.

93 Stroppiana 2006 Gabutti Bussia (Barolo); \$NA. This is an impressive Barolo that offers a far-reaching bouquet of wild berries, toasted hazelnut, hummus, cola, ginger and blue flowers. In the mouth, you'll feel rich, ripe fruit and elongated, polished tannins. Hold this wine for five to ten more years. —M.L.

93 Tenuta Rocca 2006 San Pietro (Barolo); \$60. San Pietro is a beautifully perfumed Barolo with delicate tones of blue flowers, violets, licorice, crushed mineral, cola and forest berry. The floral nuances transfer to the mouth, adding to the wine's overall persistency and complexity. Hold five more years. Imported by Hey Day Corporation. —M.L.

93 Virna Borgogno 2004 Preda Sarmassa Riserva (Barolo); \$NA. The Preda Sarmassa Barolo Riserva offers an interesting and immediate bouquet of cola, currants, dried mint, green olive and capers. This is a dis-

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tinctive and special wine that would pair wonderfully against a meat dish with an herbal element. Try it with beef and mint jelly or herb-encrusted lamb chops. Imported by Ionia Atlantic. —M.L.

92 Agostino Bosco 2006 Neirane (Barolo); \$45. Neirane is a balanced Barolo with soft notes of cherry, black fruit and spice wrapped tight around a solid core of quality fruit. The wine tastes tight and tannic at this young age (it makes your mouth pucker) but it's a very nice example of a beautifully made Nebbiolo. Imported by Tanaro River Imports LLC. —M.L.

92 Bric Cenciurio 2006 (Barolo); \$NA. This bright and lively base Barolo from Bric Cenciurio delivers a full hand of aromatic cards: you'll detect fresh berry fruit, spice, espresso bean, mineral and licorice. It's a very smooth and polished wine that could use a few more years of cellar aging to loosen up the firmness of its tannins. Imported by Italia Wine Imports. —M.L.

92 Cascina Adelaide 2006 Cannubi (Barolo); \$82. Cascina Adelaide consistently offers a modern (ie: plump, ripe, dense) taste profile on its important wines. Even this expression from the Cannubi cru, a vineyard noted for the elegant and ethereal nature of its wines, delivers a bolder, bigger style. Aromas include roasted espresso bean, blackberry and polished black stone. Imported by Tesori Wines. —M.L.

92 Cascina Ballarin 2006 Bussia (Barolo); \$NA. Cascina Ballarin delivers a clean and straightforward expression of the famed Bussia cru with all the depth and complexity you can expect with Nebbiolo. This is a steady, confident wine with solid tannins and a bright, mouth-cleansing finish. Imported by Ideal Wine and Spirits Co. Inc. —M.L.

92 Cascina Ballarin 2006 Bricco Rocca (Barolo); \$NA. Barolo Bricco Rocca still needs a few more years in the cellar to allow for full integrations of its spice, fruit, tobacco and mineral components. This beautiful wine is ripe with potential and the mouthfeel is plush and velvety with a wonderful fade of smoke and black fruit. Drink after 2018. Imported by Ideal Wine and Spirits Co. Inc. —M.L.

92 Cascina Cucco 2006 Cerrati Vigna Cucco (Barolo); \$NA. You'll enjoy the elegance and refined nature of this Barolo from the Serralunga d'Alba municipality. Bright aromas of cherry, vanilla, cola and ginger are carefully woven into the wine's bouquet and the mouthfeel is characterized by long, drying mineral notes. Imported by Italia Wine Imports. —M.L.

92 Cavalier Bartolomeo 2006 Cannubi San Lorenzo (Barolo); \$NA. Here's a wine that begs a pairing with a truffle dish: black truffle Cornish hen or creamy risotto with white truffle flakes would do the trick. Cannubi San Lorenzo's aromas include spice, cherry, cola, white licorice, white mushroom and smoked ham. This is a beautiful wine with a firm, determined but elegant finish. Imported by Franco Wine Imports. —M.L.

92 Cavallotto 2004 Bricco Boschis Riserva Vigna San Giuseppe (Barolo); \$NA. Here's a vineyard-designate Barolo Riserva with pristine aromas of cherry, wild berry, smoke, tar, licorice and leather. The streamlined mouthfeel is polished yet firm, and the wine offers a long fade of cherry and spice flavors. —M.L.

92 Ciabot Berton 2006 Roggeri (Barolo); \$90. Blackberry, sweet vanilla and candied fruit are backed by oak-related aromas of spice and tobacco: But, the real beauty of this wine is that those determined aromas are backed by a delicate fluttering of cola, licorice and eucalyptus. This is a long aging wine and the natural heft and thickness of its texture suggests that it has many years to go. Imported by Superior Wines LLC. —M.L.

92 Comm. G. B. Burlotto 2006 Vigneto Cannubi (Barolo); \$58. This Barolo from the Cannubi vineyard opens with a delicate aromatic embroidery of vanilla, forest berry, cola, spice and licorice. The texture here is tight, fine and very silky and those characteristic Nebbiolo flavors last a long time on the finish. You could save this wine five to 10 more years and pair it with slow-cooked duck confit. Imported by Bacchanal Wines. —M.L.

92 Damilano 2006 Cannubi (Barolo); \$76. The prized Cannubi cru offers fruit that is interpreted by some of the finest winemakers in northern Italy. This expression from the dynamic Damilano winery is character-

ized by tight tannins, power, personality and ripe berry flavors. Pair this Barolo with risotto topped with thinly shaved truffles. Imported by Vias Imports. —M.L.

92 Deltetto 2006 Sistaglia (Barolo); \$NA. There's a beautifully delicate nature to this wine that is evident in its pristine floral aromas and its feminine notes of raspberry and wild berry. Hints of smoke and tar appear at the end and the wine is tight and firm in the mouth. Don't worry about longevity; there's enough pulp and structure to guarantee a long aging future ahead. Imported by Casa Bruno. —M.L.

92 Francesco Sobrero 2004 Pernanno Riserva (Barolo); \$NA. Here's an evolved and sophisticated Barolo Riserva with savory aromas of crushed black pepper, balsam, hummus, old spice, licorice and root beer. The wine is drying and streamlined in the mouth, and the long finish is accented by lively fruit flavors. —M.L.

92 Fratelli Alessandria 2006 Gramolere (Barolo); \$82. Barolo Gramolere offers an attractive window onto the Nebbiolo grape with peek views at its inherent complexity and elegance. The wine opens with a ruby-garnet color and offers aromas of wild berry, white cherry, tar, licorice, hazelnut and ginger. Imported by Villa Italia. —M.L.

92 G D Vajra 2006 Luigi Baudana Cerrera (Barolo); \$85. Very different from the Bricco delle Viole cru expression from the same producer, this wine offers bold, ripe fruit with lingering tones of red cherry, leather, charcoal and campfire. The fruit is thick and succulent and the finish offers sweet, succulent spice flavors. Multiple U.S. importers. —M.L.

92 G D Vajra 2006 Bricco delle Viole (Barolo); \$75. Barolo Bricco delle Viole is a lush and generous wine with a bright ruby color and attractively intense aromas of cherry, wild berry, nutmeg, clove, powdered licorice and root beer. The oak influence is still obvious at this early stage, but will no doubt integrate with time. The mouthfeel is exceedingly soft, smooth and velvety. You don't need to wait too many years before uncorking this bottle. Imported by Martin Scott Wines. —M.L.

92 Giacomo Grimaldi 2006 Le Coste (Barolo); \$NA. Very different than the 2005 vintage, Barolo Le Coste from Giacomo Grimaldi opens with a brownish-amber color and ripe berry or candied fruit aromas. There are beautifully fine aromas of tar, asphalt and licorice in the background that help balance it out. A Marc de Grazia selection; various American importers. —M.L.

92 Giacosa Fratelli 2006 Bussia (Barolo); \$52. Here's an expression of Nebbiolo from the celebrated Bussia cru that opens with juicy fruit tones of cherry and blackberry backed by charred notes of campfire, cured beef, cigar box, leather and crushed granite. The tannins here boast a very polished, almost squeaky quality. Hold for five more years at least. Imported by Bedford International. —M.L.

92 Giacosa Fratelli 2005 Vigna Mandorlo (Barolo); \$75. This is an elegant and refined Barolo with focused aromas of black fruit, drying mineral and root beer. There's also a playful side that emerges thanks to the wine's ripe and plush mouthfeel. Sure, it's a structured, tannic wine but its fine texture helps make it approachable within the next five years or so. Imported by Bedford International. —M.L.

92 Gian Piero Marrone 2006 Pichemej (Barolo); \$NA. This Barolo with the vocally challenging name Pichemej reveals a dark and moody side that is reinforced by aromas of black fruit, plum, pressed rose, tar and asphalt. There's a textured, earthy quality here followed by firmly drying tannins. Pair this wine with tender beef ribs. Imported by Latitude Wines, Inc. —M.L.

92 Gianfranco Bovio 2006 Rocchetevino (Barolo); \$NA. Extreme elegance and balance characterize Gianfranco Bovio's Barolo Rocchetevino. The wine is studied and sophisticated with a clean presentation of fruit, spice and ethereal balsam or herbal aromas. It's a toned and carefully structured wine that will last many long years in the cellar. Imported by Robert Chadderdon Selections. —M.L.

92 Gianni Gagliardo 2004 Preve Riserva (Barolo); \$125. Here's a Barolo that lives up to its "riserva" status thanks to aged aromas of old spice, leather, black mineral, root beer, tar and menthol-like intensity. There are some earthy, dusty tones on the finish and the

wine imparts firm, ripe tannins in the mouth. Riservas are usually aged one more year than base Barolos. Imported by Enotec Imports, Inc. —M.L.

92 Giovanni Rosso 2006 Serralunga (Barolo); \$38. Giovanni Rosso's Barolo Serralunga opens with bright intensity and lively aromas of black cherry, raspberry, smoke, mineral, red rose, licorice and root beer. Those floral-rose nuances are especially beautiful and the wine should age at least five more years so that the tannins soften. Imported by Massanois Imports. —M.L.

92 Grimaldi Bruna 2006 Camilla (Barolo); \$NA. This Barolo exhibits sweet aromas of berry fruit, Christmas spice and vanilla. It's a bold, confident wine with a smooth but firm quality in the mouth that hits all the right marks. Pair this Barolo with marinated lamb and dried fig jelly. Imported by Premium Brands. —M.L.

92 Guido Porro 2006 Vigna S. Caterina (Barolo); \$39. Elegant and pure in essence, this traditional interpretation of Barolo offers a long and steady aromatic lineup of wild berry, spice, cola and mineral aromas. The wine feels streamlined and pristine in the mouth and will age many more years in the cellar. Imported by Kermit Lynch Wine Merchant. —M.L.

92 Guido Porro 2006 Vigna Lazzairasco (Barolo); \$39. Compared to the estate's S. Caterina expression of Barolo, the Lazzairasco cru delivers higher intensity in terms of its spice and vanilla tones. The wine is young, well structured, lively and fresh with a very elegant mouthfeel. Imported by Kermit Lynch Wine Merchant. —M.L.

92 Marziano Abbona 2006 Pressenda (Barolo); \$56. The Barolo Pressenda opens with bold, black aromas of toasted hazelnut, crushed granite, prunes, plums and smoky barbecue sauce. That thick intensity follows through to the mouth where the wine shows concentration and a tight, dense style: Hold for five to ten years. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd. —M.L.

92 Palladino 2006 Serralunga (Barolo); \$48. Here's a beautiful expression of Barolo with finely textured tannins,

bright acidity, drying talc powder or mineral notes and tons of fresh berry and cherry intensity. This is a particularly refined and elegant wine that, when aged a few more years in the bottle, will pair with veal, pork or beef. Imported by Enotec Imports, Inc. —M.L.

92 Parusso 2006 Le Coste Mosconi (Barolo); \$94. Le Coste Mosconi delivers a very attractive ensemble of ripe fruit aromas with oak-driven shadings of vanilla, cinnamon and clove. No single aroma is over the top and the wine is indeed nicely integrated and balanced. The tannins are drying and tight, creating a firm impression on the close. Imported by Montecastelli Selections. —M.L.

92 Piazza Armando 2006 Barolo; \$40. Sure this Barolo is slightly on the ripe side with mature fruit notes of strawberry and raspberry aromas. But it also offers elegance and complexity with supporting notes of coffee, espresso and spice. A long finish and drying tannins close the deal. Imported by Angelini Wine. —M.L.

92 Pio Cesare 2006 Barolo; \$61. Here is a classic expression of Barolo from a very good vintage that opens with bright fruit aromas that are embellished by carefully measured oak tones. You'll recognize blackberry, cassis, tobacco, mineral, cola and humus. The tannins are young and this wine requires more years of bottle aging. Imported by Maisons Marques & Domaines USA. —M.L.

92 Rivetto 2006 Leon (Barolo); \$NA. Rivetto is making some very interesting wines and is worth keeping a close eye on. The Leon Barolo opens with plump aromas of coffee, cherry, blackberry, spice and ripe berry fruit. It's a generous and velvety wine with firm tannins and a dusty, finely textured mouthfeel. Imported by Vintage Imports, Inc. —M.L.

92 Rivetto 2005 Leon (Barolo); \$50. The dynamic Rivetto family has been making wine since 1902 and the newest generation of winemakers is worth keeping an eye on. This bright and elegant Barolo shows aromas of spice, cola, cherry, tar, prune and black currants. It tastes smooth and elegant and shows firm structure in the mouth. Imported by Voliovinio. —M.L.

92 Rocche Costamagna 2006 Bricco Francesco (Barolo); \$NA. Named after the winery's founder, Francesco Costamagna, Bricco Francesco is a ripe and juicy Barolo with pulpy fruit and intense aromas of cherry, tobacco, strawberry and cola. There's a bit of vanilla and sweet spice as well and the wine is generously textured with smooth tannins. Imported by Laird & Company. —M.L.

92 Tenuta Arnulfo 2006 Costa di Susia (Barolo); \$50. Here's a very attractive and seductive Barolo with chiseled mineral tones that really help the wine stand out in a crowd. Layers of graphite and slate give purity, linearity and clarity to this austere and elegant expression. Earthy tones, as well as forest berry flavors, appear on the long finish. Imported by Siena Imports. —M.L.

92 Tenuta Rocca 2006 Tenuta Rocca (Barolo); \$48. Founded in 1986, Tenuta Rocca is a hilltop property in Monforte d'Alba that overlooks some of the most beautiful landscapes in the Langhe. This wonderful Barolo opens with sweet smells of candle wax, nutmeg, ginger, chocolate and bright red fruit. The wine imparts a squeaky clean, polished feel in the mouth. Imported by Hey Day Corporation. —M.L.

92 Terre da Vino 2006 Paesi Tuoi (Barolo); \$NA. With the whimsical name Paesi Tuoi ("your countries"), this youthful Barolo will definitely appeal to refined, international taste buds. The wine opens beautifully with loads of rose, violet and blue flower. In the mouth, it shows soft, silky tannins and bright acidity. Drink after 2015. Imported by International Wine Traders. —M.L.

92 Virna Borgogno 2006 Cannubi Boschis (Barolo); \$NA. From the celebrated Cannubi Boschis cru, here's a bright and luminous Barolo that opens with a deep ruby color and aromas of cherry, cola and cassis. Black fruit, tar and spice appear on the palate and the wine tastes tart, plummy and surprisingly succulent compared to most Nebbiolo-based wines. Imported by Ionia Atlantic. —M.L.

91 Anselma 2006 Famiglia Anselma (Barolo); \$NA. The rigorously *en famille* Anselma estate offers a bold and innovative interpretation of Barolo with loads of red fruit, cola and exotic spice. Despite its big aro-

matic personality, the wine is subdued and elegant in the mouth with silky smoothness and a long, mineral-driven finish. —M.L.

91 Barale Fratelli 2004 Vigna Castellero Riserva (Barolo); \$NA. Riserva Vigna Castellero is an approachable and elegant food wine with focused aromas of wild berry and cassis, backed by mineral, cola and powdered licorice. There's a polished and fine nature to the mouthfeel and the wine would stand up to juicy filet mignon topped with foie gras and mushroom pâté. Imported by Lo Duca Bros. —M.L.

91 Borgogno Giacomo e Figli 2004 Vigna Liste Riserva (Barolo); \$102. The Riserva Barolo from the Vigna Liste cru proves to be an enticing and inviting wine with pristine aromas of forest berry, cola and leather. The wine's persona is traditional and elegant and there's enough structure and freshness to ensure long cellar aging; at least five to 10 more years. Imported by Indigenous Selections. —M.L.

91 Boroli 2006 Villero (Barolo); \$71. Boroli is a dynamic winery worth keeping a close eye on. Barolo Villero takes a traditional approach that speaks highly of the beautifully hilly area that shaped the wine. Delicate aromas include wild berries, dried orange zest, apple skin, licorice, tar and cigar box. In the mouth, the wine is streamlined and tight. Imported by Dalla Terra Winery Direct. —M.L.

91 Brovia 2006 Rocche (Barolo); \$NA. Here's a distinctive expression of Nebbiolo with aromas of sweet cherry, vanilla, caramel, ground clove, cassis and moist pipe tobacco. The wine is tart and streamlined in the mouth with impressive intensity and persistency. Imported by Rosenthal Estate. —M.L.

91 Cascina Cucco 2006 Cerrati (Barolo); \$NA. Lively cherry, blackberry, cola and cedar tones mark the bouquet of this ruby-colored Barolo from the Cerrati cru. Toasted oak and spice aromas are delicately woven within and the wine finishes with crisp freshness and firm tannins. Imported by Italia Wine Imports. —M.L.

91 Cascina del Monastero 2004 Bricco Riund Riserva (Barolo); \$NA. The 2004 Bricco Riund Riserva makes a very nice first impression thanks to the elegant and fine nature

of its aromas. There's a definite aromatic lift here, spurred forward by buoyant aromas of root beer, cherry, menthol, white stone and dried currants. Give it a few more years in the bottle to soft those firm tannins. Imported by Metropolis Wine Merchants, Inc. —M.L.

91 Cascina Luisin 2006 Leon (Barolo); \$55. Barolo Leon makes a wonderful first impression thanks to its aromas of ripe berry fruit, Indian spice, cola, licorice and ginger. There's deep dimension and personality here and the wine ends with firmly polished tannins. Imported by Zig Zagando. —M.L.

91 Cavallotto 2004 Vignolo Riserva (Barolo); \$NA. The Vignolo Barolo Riserva opens with ripe aromas of black cherry and strawberry followed by leather, tobacco, tar and black licorice. The wine still has more aging to do: the mouthfeel is sharp, generous and polished. —M.L.

91 Ceretto 2005 Zonchera (Barolo); \$51. Zonchera Barolo is presented as the estate's soft and most "modern" interpretation of Barolo (a sometimes austere and shy wine). This expression, on the other hand, is bold, bright and packed tight with fresh fruit nuances as well as tangy spice and tobacco. You don't need to cellar age this wine long because it's perfectly ready to drink now. Imported by Wilson Daniels Ltd. —M.L.

91 Ciabot Berton 2004 Riserva (Barolo); \$90. This 2004 Riserva Barolo opens with beautifully seasoned and savory aromas of balsam, hummus, dried tobacco and white stone. The wine is firm with dusty tannins that leave a drying impression in the mouth. Imported by Superior Wines LLC. —M.L.

91 Comm. G. B. Burlotto 2006 Acclivi (Barolo); \$50. Milky chocolate and creamy almond paste open the nose of this ripe and rich Barolo. Shadings of citrus, spice, plum, licorice and root beer add to the complexity. This is a pure, elegant and traditional expression of Nebbiolo that needs another five to 10 years in the cellar. Imported by Bacchanal Wines. —M.L.

91 Contratto 2003 Cerequio (Barolo); \$120. The celebrated Cerequio cru is known for its elegant and refined wines. However, in this hot vintage, you can taste the maturity of the fruit thanks to the wine's aromas of

plum, prune and spice cake. Clay soils help shape the wine's natural density and structure. Imported by Bedford International. —M.L.

91 Elio Grasso 2006 Gavarini Chiniera (Barolo); \$NA. The Ferrero factory in Alba fills the air with delicious aromas of melted chocolate and roasted hazelnut. Those are the same fragrances you will enjoy here backed by standard Nebbiolo tones of wild berry, cola and earth. The tannins are drying, firm and help keep the palate clean. A Marc de Grazia selection; various American importers. —M.L.

91 Eredi Lodali 2006 Lorens (Barolo); \$75. Barolo Lorens offers a hearty, meaty expression of Barolo that would pair with beef and wild mushroom stew or bacon-wrapped quail served with wild rice. The wine boasts deep, concentrated extraction with aromas of bresaola, smoke, spice, ripe cherry and red rose accents. It's thick and long lasting with slightly textured tannins. Imported by Siema LLC. —M.L.

91 Francesco Rinaldi 2006 Le Brunate (Barolo); \$NA. The Brunate cru, with denser soils, is known for meatier, more structured wines. This Barolo offers elegance, power and complexity with lingering aromas of exotic spice, black fruit and root beer. It's also exceptionally bright and lively in the mouth and would pair with a hearty wintry dish such as beef Bourguignon. Imported by Polaner Selections. —M.L.

91 Franco Conterno 2004 Bussia Munie Riserva (Barolo); \$NA. This Riserva opens with a garnet color and browning edges, followed by sophisticated aromas of old spice, cola, licorice and tar. The wine treads over the palate in light, delicate steps and leaves loads of menthol and eucalyptus-like intensity. Hold five years or more. —M.L.

91 Fratelli Casetta 2006 Vigna Case Nere (Barolo); \$NA. A sensation of polished black stone with cherry, leather, tar and spice opens the nose of this beautifully elegant Barolo made with fruit sourced from the Case Nere vineyard. The wine is soft, modern and plush with a rich velvety finish and a savory end note. Imported by Sober LLC. —M.L.

91 Germano Ettore 2006 Cerretta (Barolo); \$NA. This is a straightforward and genuine Barolo with deep layers of bright fruit, spice and mineral packaged

seamlessly together as a whole. In the mouth, the wine is clean and elegant with dry, finely textured tannins. Imported by Sussex Wine Merchants. —M.L.

91 Germano Ettore 2006 Prapò (Barolo); \$NA. Prapò is textbook Barolo with classic aromas of wild berry, white truffle, cola, ginger and root beer. The wine has a menthol-like lift and tastes elegant and fine on the close. This is a perfect wine for Barolo purists. Imported by Sussex Wine Merchants. —M.L.

91 Giacomo Ascheri 2006 Sorano (Barolo); \$50. Smoky graphite notes with spice and black cherry open the nose of this nicely concentrated Barolo from the Sorano cru in Serralunga d'Alba. The wine is well textured with firm but velvety tannins and refreshing crispness on the close. Imported by World Wine Source. —M.L.

91 Giacomo Ascheri 2006 Sorano Coste & Bricco (Barolo); \$70. There's a very interesting and unique Asian quality here that reveals itself on the nose as saffron, soya, clove and Chinese barbecue sauce. The wine is lean and compact in the mouth with a long, silky finish: Hold five to 10 years in your cellar. Imported by World Wine Source. —M.L.

91 Giacomo Fenocchio 2004 Bussia Riserva (Barolo); \$NA. This elegant Riserva expression from the Bussia cru has some ripe flavors of wild berry and raspberry followed by nicely evolved aromas of leather, spice, cola and fine Indian spice. The mouth feels tight and compact and this wine sports a long, mineral finish. —M.L.

91 Giacomo Fenocchio 2004 Bussia (Barolo); \$50. From the celebrated Bussia cru, this elegant Barolo shows pristine aromas of cherry cola, tar, licorice, violet and dried beef jerky. True to Barolo tradition, the wine shows a garnet color and firm, drying tannins. Imported by Masciarelli Wine Co. —M.L.

91 Giacomo Fenocchio 2004 Villero (Barolo); \$50. Wines from the Villero cru tend to show great elegance and complexity of aromas. This expression does just that and adds tones of spice, tar, black currant and cola along the way. The tannins are dry and dusty and the wine will age nicely for ten years or more. Imported by Masciarelli Wine Co. —M.L.

91 Giacomo Fenocchio 2006 Villero (Barolo); \$NA. Giacomo Fenocchio's Barolo Villero is an extremely clean and polished wine with cheerful aromas of eucalyptus, root beer, hummus, crushed stone, smoke, tar and small forest berries. This is the perfect wine to pair with stewed veal or lamb. Imported by Masciarelli Wine Co. —M.L.

91 Giacosa Fratelli 2005 Bussia (Barolo); \$52. The Bussia cru boasts elegant, feminine wines and this expression is no exception. You'll get tight aromas of blue flower, cassis, wet earth and white chocolate. The wine is elegant and silky on the close. The young tannins need another five years of cellar aging to soften. Imported by Bedford International. —M.L.

91 Gianfranco Bovio 2006 Vigne Gattera (Barolo); \$NA. This Barolo from the Gattera vineyard of La Morra opens with bold personality and chiseled aromas of cola, spice, black fruit, root beer, licorice, dried tobacco and herbs. The wine holds the banner high as far as Nebbiolo tradition goes and offers a long, spice-filled finish. Drink after 2015. Imported by Robert Chadderdon Selections. —M.L.

91 Gianni Gagliardo 2005 Serre (Barolo); \$75. Gianni Gagliardo is producing excellent results from the estate's newly refurbished winery. This expression from the Serre cru shows elegance and harmony, especially in how its aromas of black fruit, tar, licorice and white truffle come together. Drying tannins and firm structure promise long aging. Imported by Enotec Imports, Inc. **Editors' Choice.** —M.L.

91 Le Ginestre 2006 Sottocastello (Barolo); \$45. From the Sottocastello, "under the castle" cru, comes this silky, polished Barolo. The bouquet here is redolent of exotic spice and church incense and there's plenty of currant berry and forest berry to give the wine a vibrant, youthful personality. But elegance is also present and so are firm tannins that suggest longevity. Imported by Mario Pippa. —M.L.

91 Le Strette 2006 Bergeisa (Barolo); \$NA. Barolo Bergeisa reveals itself to be an elegant and sophisticated wine with delicate shadings of lead pencil, earthy tones, fragrant violets and black currants. The mouthfeel is tight with finely textured tannins and the finish is very polished and refined. —M.L.

91 Livia Fontana 2006 (Barolo); \$45. From the Castiglione Falletto subzone, this classic Barolo delivers delicate aromas of spice, eucalyptus, root beer, hazelnut, underbrush and smoked ham. You'll even notice savory elements of prosciutto or bresaola. The mouthfeel is elegant and bright with drying tannins. Imported by Selected Estates of Europe Ltd. —M.L.

91 Luigino Grimaldi 2006 Vigna San Biagio (Barolo); \$NA. This Barolo delivers simple and clean fruit tones (think cherry and raspberry) that are shrouded in delicate veils of root beer, white mushroom, bresaola, shaved mineral and dried herbs. On the whole, this is a tight and compact wine that is elegant and complex. Pair it with wild mushroom crepes with creamy gruyère cheese. —M.L.

91 Marcarini 2006 La Serra (Barolo); \$57. Here's an earthy, savory expression of Barolo from the prized La Serra cru that truly shows Nebbiolo typicity. You'll recognize aromas of iron and mineral backed by cola, white mushroom, tar and cassis fruit. That earthy personality is followed by drying, dusty tannins and the wine is exceptionally long on the finish. Imported by Empson (USA) Ltd. —M.L.

91 Mario Gagliasso 2004 Riserva (Barolo); \$NA. Elegance and finesse characterize this wine and suggest that it may already be suitable to drink within the next five years or so. Aromas include dark chocolate, tar, espresso grinds and smoked beef. Those aged tertiary fragrances are emerging now and the wine is thick, firm and luscious on the close. Imported by Acid Inc Selections. —M.L.

91 Mauro Veglio 2006 Castelletto (Barolo); \$50. Barolo Castelletto opens with ripe aromas of blackberry and strawberry with background tones of old leather, spice, espresso bean, tar and root beer. There are drying mineral tones as well and the wine ends with young, slightly astringent tannins. Imported by Wine Warehouse Imports. —M.L.

91 Michele Chiarlo 2006 Cannubi (Barolo); \$100. Here's a light, bright and tonic Cannubi-based Barolo that delivers aromas of wild blueberry, white almond, spice, violets, licorice and cherry cola. There's a touch of red apple in there as well and the wine washes clean over the palate, imparting structure and

freshness along the way. Drink after 2015. Imported by Kobrand. —M.L.

91 Monchiero 2006 Rocche (Barolo); \$NA. This Barolo with fruit sourced from the Rocche cru in Castiglione Falletto offers slightly aged aromas of old spice, candied fruit, smoked ham and cured beef. The wine is elegant and very drying on the finish. Hold until 2015. Imported by Scoperta Importing Co. Inc. —M.L.

91 Monti 2006 Barolo; \$NA. Here is a clean and straightforward Barolo from the Monforte d'Alba area that offers feminine aromas of blue flower, pressed rose, licorice, ginger and root beer. The wine delivers a compact, streamlined feel and a very polished, fine finish. —M.L.

91 Nada Giuseppe 2006 Barolo; \$NA. Giuseppe Nada brings us a gorgeous Barolo that oozes elegance and intensity. The wine is redolent of tar, black currant, spice and dried licorice powder. The tannins are drying and fine and leave a long, polished sensation in the mouth. It's a very nice ensemble. Imported by Bayfield Importing Ltd. —M.L.

91 Oddero 2006 Villero (Barolo); \$65. Putting your nose into a glass of Oddero Barolo Villero is like sniffing a handful of Langhe soil. This wine speaks highly of its territory with aromas of smoke, earth, forest berry, white truffle, hazelnut, cola, root beer, hummus and dried apple skins. In the mouth, the tannins are impressively polished and fine. Imported by Soilair Selection. —M.L.

91 Paolo Manzone 2006 Meriame (Barolo); \$45. Barolo Meriame is a surprisingly tonic and bright wine with a ruby color and amber highlights. The wine is elegant and smooth on the nose with wild berries, ginger, hummus and powdered licorice. It finishes with bright menthol and balsam nuances. Imported by Grape Expectations (CA). —M.L.

91 Pecchenino 2006 San Giuseppe (Barolo); \$NA. Here's a dark and brooding Barolo that opens with masculine aromas of dark fruit, Indian spice, black tea, tar, resin and licorice. The intensity and complexity are impressive. The wine needs five more years of bottle aging to soften those young tannins. Imported by Vias Imports. —M.L.

91 Pecchenino 2006 Le Coste (Barolo); \$106. This expression of Nebbiolo from the Le Coste vineyard opens with fresh and vibrant aromas of cherries, raspberries and cassis. Those fruit notes are enhanced by spice, vanilla and smoky highlights that brighten up the wine's firm but streamlined mouthfeel. Imported by Vias Imports. —M.L.

91 Poderi Colla 2006 Dardi Le Rose Bussia (Barolo); \$73. Despite its young age now, the 2006 Dardi Le Rose Bussia Barolo will go on record as a classy, charming wine with long aging potential. The mineral tones are well etched and are followed by luscious layers of red fruit and spice. The tannins still need time to soften. Imported by Empson (USA) Ltd. —M.L.

91 Prunotto 2006 Barolo; \$60. Prunotto tends to exemplify a ripe, almost jammy style of Barolo with succulent cherry and smoked meat characteristics followed by vanilla, cinnamon, mineral, blackberry and licorice. The intensity is wonderful here but the wine still needs a few extra aging years in the bottle to relax those young tannins. Imported by Winebow. —M.L.

91 Roccheviberti 2006 Rocche di Castiglione (Barolo); \$NA. Here's a compact, streamlined wine that very much lives up to Barolo tradition. Aromas here include ethereal balsam notes, eucalyptus, coffee, tar, black fruit, mineral and honey-roasted ham. In the mouth, the wine leaves a tight, tart and long-lasting impression. Imported by Domace Vino. —M.L.

91 Scarzello 2006 Vigna Merenda (Barolo); \$56. Barolo Vigna Merenda opens with a bright bouquet composed of cherry, spice, floral and balsam elements. This is also an extremely mineral-driven wine that exposes a vein of graphite or crushed stone at its core. Thanks to the wine's natural structure and long persistency, it would make a perfect pairing partner to any dish with black truffles. Imported by Vignaioli. —M.L.

91 Schiavenza 2006 Broglio (Barolo); \$NA. Broglio is a vineyard in the Serralunga d'Alba area of the Langhe and this expression of Nebbiolo offers a ruby color with orange highlights, followed by aromas of cola, wild berry, lemon zest and leather. The mouthfeel

is drying and firmly tannic. Imported by David Bowler Wine. —M.L.

91 Seghesio 2006 Vigneto La Villa (Barolo); \$NA. Vigneto La Villa opens with ripe, pulpy fruit and fresh aromas of plum, blackberry, crushed mineral and exotic spice. The wine takes on a ruby color and there is slight browning on the edges. The mouthfeel shows great balance between the fresh acidity and drying tannins. A Marc de Grazia selection; various American importers. —M.L.

91 Silvano Bolmida 2006 Bussia (Barolo); \$NA. This bold wine from the acclaimed Bussia cru delivers meaty and masculine aromas of blackberry, smoked ham, vanilla bean, cured beef, nutmeg, clove and polished black stone. The thick, rich mouthfeel is irresistible and the wine is long lasting and elegant on the close. Imported by Morgan Import LLC. —M.L.

91 Stroppiana 2006 Vigna San Giacomo (Barolo); \$NA. Barolo Vigna San Giacomo is a meaty, masculine expression of Nebbiolo with dense, dark fruit, cherry, plum and prune with accents of bresaola, smoked beef and spice. The tannins are drying and firm and this style of wine could pair with turkey roast with raisin, apple and sage stuffing. —M.L.

91 Tenuta Montanello 2006 Montanello (Barolo); \$NA. Here's a beautifully bright Barolo with characteristic aromas of moist earth, pipe tobacco, wild berries, forest floor and asphalt. The mouthfeel is polished and fine in texture. Pair with tender, hardwood smoked pork. —M.L.

91 Terre da Vino 2006 Essenze (Barolo); \$NA. Essenza is a ripe expression of Nebbiolo from the 2006 vintage with earthy nuances, wild berry and pressed red rose. This Barolo offers very good dimension and overall depth of aroma, backed by a thicker, pulpier mouthfeel. The tannins are still young so let this wine age at least five more years. Imported by International Wine Traders. —M.L.

90 Anselma 2006 (Barolo); \$42. Here's an earthy, meaty Barolo with characteristic aromas of smoked honey ham, bresaola, root beer and exotic spice. The fruit element comes forward as blackberry and cassis. The wine is slightly bitter and astringent. Drink it well after

2015 to let those tannins soften. Imported by Bacchanal Wines. —M.L.

90 Barale Fratelli 2006 Bussia (Barolo); \$NA. This Barolo from the Bussia cru offers all kinds of smoky aromatic veils wrapped around tones of cured beef, licorice, toasted hazelnut, hummus, cola and blackberry. It sports a lean, compact feel in the mouth with well-etched tannins on the close. Imported by Lo Duca Bros. —M.L.

90 Barale Fratelli 2006 Vigna Castellerio (Barolo); \$NA. This vineyard-designate Barolo opens with slightly gritty aromas of coffee rinds, crushed mineral and raspberry or pomegranate fruit. But the aromatic impact is also surprising as those notes evolve into cola, root beer and earthy violets. The wine is silky and firm in the mouth and the tannins are still young. Imported by Lo Duca Bros. —M.L.

90 Brovia 2006 Ca' Mia (Barolo); \$NA. This is a distinctive and unique Barolo with an edgy, brambly quality that comes forth aromatically as wild berry, forest floor, chopped herb, furniture wax for antiques and root beer. The wine leaves your palate with a dry, dusty impression thanks to the fine nature of its tannins. Imported by Rosenthal Estate. —M.L.

90 Cascina del Monastero 2006 Bricco Luciani (Barolo); \$NA. Here's a Barolo with a light and delicate touch. Bricco Luciani offers a steady stream of currants, root beer, tar, licorice and dusty mineral aromas. In fact, the mineral component is decisive and adds backbone to the wine in the mouth as well. This expression focuses less on brawn and extraction and more on elegance and finesse. Imported by Metropolis Wine Merchants, Inc. —M.L.

90 Contratto 2003 Tenuta Secolo (Barolo); \$65. The Secolo vineyard is at the heart of the Cerequio cru and has been owned and farmed by the Contratto family since 1959. This edition of the wine shows warm notes of pressed raspberry and plum backed by textured tannins and solid structure. Imported by Bedford International. —M.L.

90 Francesco Rinaldi 2006 Cannubio (Barolo); \$NA. There's a firmly elegant and traditional aspect to this ruby-hued Barolo that suggests a pairing with something like bacon-wrapped scallops: in other words, a dish that is

textured, delicate and aromatically intense at the same time. The bouquet here is redolent of violets, white cherry, spice and powdered licorice. Imported by Polaner Selections. —M.L.

90 Franco Conterno 2006 Vigna Pugnane (Barolo); \$NA. Here's a vinous and youthful Barolo that definitely needs five-plus years of bottle aging. The aromas are fresh and piquant, including forest berry, cola, balsam and white truffle. The mouthfeel is satisfying and pleasantly intense with a long tannic fade. —M.L.

90 Franco Conterno 2006 Bussia Munie (Barolo); \$NA. Despite its young age, Barolo Bussia Munie already shows signs of age and evolution: the fruit is on the dried or candied side and the oak tones are dusty and well integrated. This wine shows harmony and class, with tight-drying tannins on the close. —M.L.

90 Francone 2006 (Barolo); \$NA. This youthful and lively Barolo comes from a winery in the La Morra municipality of the Langhe. Although the oak influences are still discernable, this wine will relax and soften with time. At this young age, you'll recognize aromas of cherry, vanilla, pipe tobacco, spice and red rose. The mouthfeel is marked by bright acidity and firmness. Imported by De Benedetto Imports. —M.L.

90 Gianfranco Bovio 2006 Arborina (Barolo); \$NA. Barolo Arborina is slightly raw and sharp at first but the quality of the fruit is evident and, in general, this wine needs more time to evolve in the bottle. At this young stage, you'll taste white cherry, Spanish cedar, graphite tones, tobacco and light shadings of smoke. It's a fine, elegant wine with a long tannic fade. Imported by Robert Chadderdon Selections. —M.L.

90 La Querciola 2006 Costa di Rose (Barolo); \$56. La Querciola's Costa di Rose Barolo shows an ethereal and feminine side with delicate aromas of cola, root beer, licorice, tar, white cherry and raw cassis berry. The wine exhibits a bright garnet color and tastes both refined but serious in the mouth thanks to its polished tannins. Imported by Vignaioli. —M.L.

90 Livia Fontana 2006 Villero (Barolo); \$50. Livia Fontana's Barolo from the Villero vineyard opens with a slightly

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aged appearance that sees brown and amber coloring. The wine's bouquet is similarly evolved with tones of candied fruit, smoked meat, licorice and crushed stone. It is, however, very youthful and bright in the mouth. Imported by Selected Estates of Europe Ltd. —M.L.

90 Mauro Veglio 2006 Rocche dell'Annunziata (Barolo); \$75. Sour fruit aromas are followed by tart white cherry, citrus zest, cedar wood, tealeaf and crushed mineral. The wine will appeal especially to Barolo traditionalists who look for complexity and elegance over brawn and power. Imported by Wine Warehouse Imports. —M.L.

90 Oddero 2006 Rocche di Castiglione (Barolo); \$69. Oddero is one of the most important historic brands in the Langhe and the Rocche di Castiglione Barolo highlights this legacy very nicely. The wine is redolent of wild berries, plums, spice, white truffle and cherry liqueur. It's an elegant, tonic wine with a garnet and amber coloring. Imported by Soilair Selection. —M.L.

90 Paolo Manzone 2006 Serralunga (Barolo); \$35. This Barolo from the Serralunga cru is steady and elegant with buoyant aromas of root beer, white cherry, licorice, hummus, crushed stone and dried ginger. The wine is astringent but cooling on the palate with zesty freshness and still-young tannins. Imported by Grape Expectations (CA). —M.L.

90 Rocca Felice 2006 (Barolo); \$19. Here is a lean, firm and austere Barolo with a dark garnet color and forthcoming aromas of black currant, tar, leather, white chocolate and slight shadings of exotic spice. The wine's texture is lean and tight with young tannins that need another five years or more to soften. Imported by Total Wine & More. —M.L.

90 Scarzello 2006 (Barolo); \$56. This Barolo, made within the township of Barolo, opens with a slightly brownish, amber appearance and delivers earth-driven aromas of licorice, white mushroom, pressed violets and cola. Pair this elegant and traditional wine with game hen stuffed with chestnuts and chopped garden herbs. Imported by Vignaioli. —M.L.

90 Tenuta L'Illuminata 2006 Tebavio (Barolo); \$70. Barolo Tebavio delivers a wild, untamed nature with aromas of wet earth,

blue flower, underbrush, white mushroom and wild berries. Those aromas are a bit muddled at first but unwind with time in the glass to reveal a solid, firm whole. In the mouth, it is streamlined and tight. Imported by Majestic Imports. —M.L.

89 Aurelio Settimo 2006 (Barolo); \$22. Aurelio Settimo offers a ripe and chewy base Barolo with cheerful aromas of almond paste, cherry liqueur and licorice. Those nuances are enhanced by dusty mineral tones and astringent tannins. The wine is powerful, tannic and bold on the close. Imported by Masciarelli Wine Co. —M.L.

89 Borgogno Giacomo e Figli 2004 Riserva (Barolo); \$61. This 2004 Barolo Riserva opens with a brownish-ruby color and aged aromas of dried currants, exotic spice, old leather and root beer. It shows tight but polished tannins and offers a drying mineral edge on the close. Don't wait too much longer to drink this wine. Imported by Indigenous Selections. —M.L.

89 Cantina Terre del Barolo 2006 (Barolo); \$NA. This fresh and lively Barolo exhibits earthy aromatic nuances with some iron, currant berry and white mushroom. Those typical floral aromas of blue flower and rose also emerge, and this Nebbiolo-based wine is characterized by excellent structure and acidity. —M.L.

89 Cavalier Bartolomeo 2006 Solanotto Altenasso (Barolo); \$NA. Here's a newly released Barolo that appears older than it actually is. The wine's ruby color shows a browning edge and aromas here reflect tertiary tones of balsam, drying mineral and licorice. In the mouth, you'll get iron-like flavors backed by fine, drying tannins. Don't wait too much longer to drink this wine. Imported by Franco Wine Imports. —M.L.

89 Elvio Cagno 2006 Ravera (Barolo); \$69. Elvio Cagno's Cascina Nuova Barolo is the darling of the 2006 vintage and Ravera, a more austere and reserved expression, is still something of an awkward teenager at this point. Mature berry tones and candied fruit come forward as do notes of cinnamon and Graham cracker. The finish is smooth and silky. Imported by Vias Imports. —M.L.

89 Giacomo Fenocchio 2006 Bussia (Barolo); \$NA. This expression from the Bussia cru opens with ripe and jammy aromas of strawberry and mature blackberry. But, no worries, the wine doesn't play all its cards on ripeness. The mouthfeel is elegant and streamlined with polished, drying tannins. Imported by Masciarelli Wine Co. —M.L.

89 Gigi Rosso 2004 Arione dell'Ulivo Riserva (Barolo); \$NA. This compact and lean Barolo Riserva opens with a light but luminous ruby color with amber highlights. The aromas here are elegant and ethereal with loads of menthol, balsam and root beer-like overtones. In the mouth, this is a particularly polished and silky wine. —M.L.

89 Giuseppe Rinaldi 2006 Brunate Le Coste (Barolo); \$95. Giuseppe Rinaldi awes and amazes with the Cannubi-San Lorenzo-Ravera Barolo, but is slightly less successful with this wine from the Brunate and Le Coste crus. The wine is lively and fresh but is also less intense on the nose. The mouthfeel is dominated (at this early stage) by thick, bitter tannins that will no doubt soften with time. Imported by Vinifera Imports. —M.L.

89 Le Strette 2006 Bergera Pezzole (Barolo); \$NA. Le Strette's Barolo from the Bergera-Pezzole vineyards is characterized by loads of fragrant exotic spice, scented church candle and bee's wax. The wine is tight and hard in the mouth with firm tannins and a sharp, determined finish. Give it at least five more years of cellar aging. —M.L.

89 Mario Gagliasso 2006 Rocche dell'Annunziata (Barolo); \$NA. This Barolo from the Rocche dell'Annunziata cru displays slightly aged aromas of spice, candied fruit, cola and root beer despite its young age. Its ruby color shows a browning edge and the wine is elegant and fine. "Old school" seems like a fitting descriptor. Imported by Acid Inc Selections. —M.L.

89 Monchiero 2006 Roere (Barolo); \$NA. Barolo Roere presents charred notes of charcoal or campfire that will relax with time but that mask some of the wine's natural fruit at this young age. The wine shows good structure and freshness and would make a perfect pairing partner to pork crown roast stuffed with

chestnuts and sage. Imported by Scoperta Importing Co. Inc. —M.L.

89 Parusso 2006 Bussia (Barolo); \$100. This expression of Barolo from the Bussia cru opens with fleshy pulp, rich concentration and very intense aromas of cola, cherry, hummus, licorice and grated ginger. There's a chunky, vinous quality and although the wine lacks the finesse of the vintage, it will most certainly evolve nicely over the years. Imported by Montecastelli Selections. —M.L.

89 Piazza Armando 2004 Sotto Castello di Novello Riserva (Barolo); \$50. Here's a Riserva Barolo from the excellent 2004 vintage with elegant and traditional characteristics and evolved aromas of smoked meat, pressed fruit, chopped spice and moist earth. The wine seems older than it is and ends with meaty flavors of cured beef and honey roasted ham. Imported by Angelini Wine. —M.L.

89 Prunotto 2006 Bussia (Barolo); \$100. Prunotto's Barolo from the Bussia cru delivers ripe and jammy tones of strawberry preserves and blackberry pie that sit heavy over Nebbiolo's characteristically ethereal aromas. This wine will appeal to those who enjoy a bigger, bolder style of Barolo that finishes with rich, succulent fruit. Imported by Winebow. —M.L.

89 Rocca Felice 2005 (Barolo); \$19. Here is a tight and polished Barolo with a touch of ripe fruit surrounded by leather, black pepper, cola, pressed violets and tar. The wine reflects the characteristics of both the Langhe and the Nebbiolo grape variety: it's elegant, structured and needs some cellar aging. Imported by Total Wine & More. —M.L.

89 Silvano Bolmida 2006 Vigne dei Fantini (Barolo); \$NA. Barolo Vigne dei Fantini presents an opening act of cherry, wild berries, cinnamon, nutmeg, hummus, cola and licorice. Act two consists of smoked ham, dried beef and a hint of natural rubber. The wine is rich, firm and powerful on the close. Imported by Morgan Import LLC. —M.L.

89 Simone Scaletta 2006 Chirlet (Barolo); \$NA. There's a slightly milky note of caramel yogurt or milk chocolate that gives this wine a warm, creamy feel. On the nose, you'll recognize oak-driven tones of cinnamon

and toasted almond with loads of plump cherry and blackberry to follow. —M.L.

89 Vinchio-Vaglio Serra 2004 Cantina Tre Serre (Barolo); \$38. Here's a straightforward but elegant expression of Nebbiolo that ages two years in oak to secure aromas of spice, cola, root beer and leather behind fruity tones of dried blueberries and currants. Pair this wine with lamb chops or pork roll marinated in fresh garden herbs. Imported by Bon Vivant Imports. —M.L.

88 Bel Colle 2006 (Barolo); \$53. This base Barolo from Bel Colle opens with slightly muddled aromas of cured ham, ripe fruit and exotic spice. It scored the same as this estate's 2007 Barbaresco Roncaglie although the finish is perhaps more elegant and refined on this wine. Imported by Aventine Hill LLC. —M.L.

88 Cantine Gemma 2006 Colarej (Barolo); \$NA. This wine shows a touch of age or flatness and its ruby color also shows some mild browning. The wine will hold a few more years but the fruit tones present now won't last forever. You'll get aromas of wild berries and red apple. —M.L.

88 Cascina del Monastero 2006 (Barolo); \$NA. Cascina del Monastero's base Barolo shows simple fruit tones and offers an easy, straight shooter approach overall. You'll get aromas of wild berry, cola and spice and the wine is firm and compact on the close. In all, it comes off as an informal interpretation of one of the world's greatest wines. Imported by Metropolis Wine Merchants, Inc. —M.L.

88 Germano Angelo 2006 Vigna Rué (Barolo); \$NA. The 2005 vintage of this vineyard designate Nebbiolo scored an outstanding 94 points, but this edition of Barolo Vigna Rué doesn't quite live up to its predecessor. There are some sharper notes of red apple, carrot and raw spice here, and although the wine is rich and chewy in the mouth, it ends with gritty but firm tannins. Imported by K&L Wine Merchants. —M.L.

88 Mario Gagliasso 2006 Torriglione (Barolo); \$NA. The overt ripeness of the fruit here presents a slight obstacle at first sniff. Once that is overcome, the wine offers a free range of blackberry, cassis, tar, leather and tobacco-like aromas. But, in the mouth you'll

taste the jamminess and maturity of the fruit. It's a smooth, soft wine with a long strawberry fade. Imported by Acid Inc Selections. —M.L.

88 San Biagio 2006 Sorano (Barolo); \$75. Earthy tones of white truffle and moist tobacco open the nose of this Barolo from the Sorano cru. There are some ripe fruit aromas of plum and prune as well and the wine fades slowly with a long, dusty finish. Imported by Enoteca Diana. —M.L.

87 Virna Borgogno 2006 Preda Sar-massa (Barolo); \$NA. Slightly quirky but wholly acceptable aromas of animal or natural rubber make a fleeting first impression. The wine then relaxes and delivers pleasing aromas of wild berry, spice and forest floor. The jury's out on how long the wine will age, but five years is a safe bet. Imported by Ionia Atlantic. —M.L.

86 Gigi Rosso 2006 Arione (Barolo); \$NA. Barolo Arione is a mature expression of Barolo with strawberry and blackberry preserves backed by volatile aromas of green apple and old spice. The wine feels rich and thick in the mouth with a thick, chewy finish. —M.L.

85 Borgogno F.lli Serio e Battista 2004 Cannubi Riserva (Barolo); \$NA. There's a milky, lactic aspect to this wine that takes a few seconds to absorb. Once you do, the nose is greeted by cherry and black spice. The mouthfeel is determined and sharp. —M.L.

85 Camerano 2006 Cannubi San Lorenzo (Barolo); \$75. There's a pungent or slightly volatile note of fresh cedar or red apple that dominates this wine and leaves little room for the wine's natural complexity to show. This Barolo is also less active in the mouth and tastes older than it really is. Imported by Singular Selections. —M.L.

85 Monti 2006 Bussia (Barolo); \$NA. Monti's Bussia Barolo, from the Monforte d'Alba subzone, opens with an aged, brown-ing color and aromas of apples, wild berries and citrus. The wine shows a lean, thin quality in the mouth. —M.L.

BARBARESCO

95 Moccagatta 2007 Basarin (Barbaresco); \$NA. Moccagatta's expres-

sion from the Basarin cru will blow you away. This thickly extracted Barbaresco opens with a rich, dark appearance and opulent aromas of sweet spice, leather, toasted almond, vanilla and ripe cherry fruit. This is a big, masculine wine that would pair with pork medallions and caramelized onions. The finish is soft and slightly sweet. Keep it in your cellar 10 years or more. A Marc de Grazia selection; various American importers. **Cellar Selection.** —M.L.

94 Bruno Rocca 2007 Rabajà (Barbaresco); \$NA. This year's best expression from the celebrated Rabajà cru, Bruno Rocca presents a beautifully integrated Barbaresco that shows equal parts fruit (prune, plum and cassis) and spice (vanilla, root beer and clove). The wine is smooth, silky and very enduring on the close with excellent structure. Drink after 2015. Imported by Trilussa Wine Company. **Cellar Selection.** —M.L.

94 Castello di Neive 2007 Santo Stefano (Barbaresco); \$NA. You'll absolutely love this wine. Barbaresco Santo Stefano offers intensity, harmony and imparts delicious aromas of sweet spice, wild berries, licorice, tar and light touches of smoke or graphite. It boasts a smooth, rich texture with bright acidity on the close. This is a very pure and pristine expression of Nebbiolo that will live long in the cellar. **Cellar Selection.** —M.L.

94 Orlando Abrigo 2007 Vigna Montersino (Barbaresco); \$NA. Executed in a plump, modern style (the wine is aged in small oak barrique), this delicious cru expression from Barbaresco is truly irresistible. The extraction is dark, thick and redolent of cherry, currant, blackberry, vanilla, spice and cinnamon. In the mouth, it is generous, smooth and long-lasting. This wine will appeal to modernists more than traditionalists. Imported by Ionia Atlantic. **Cellar Selection.** —M.L.

94 Poderi Elia 2007 Serracapelli (Barbaresco); \$50. This outlier wine sparked much controversy at the Nebbiolo blind tastings because of the thickness of its extraction and the darkness of its appearance. Serracapelli is a beautifully rich wine that doesn't necessarily highlight Barbaresco typicity. You'll get opulent aromas of black cherry, spice, leather and moist tobacco. The mouthfeel is rich, round and velvety. Imported by Small Vineyards LLC. —M.L.

93 Albino Rocca 2007 Vigneto Brich Ronchi (Barbaresco); \$NA. Vigneto Brich Ronchi opens with bright and plump fruit tones that recall black currant, cherry and cassis followed by elegant tones of smoke, leather and tobacco. The wine is intense and powerful with a soft, velvety texture backed by structured tannins that give it backbone and staying power. Very nice. A Marc de Grazia selection; various American importers. —M.L.

93 Ceretto 2006 Bricco Asili Bricco Asili (Barbaresco); \$154. From the celebrated Bricco Asili cru, this Barbaresco is a beautiful embodiment of elegance, grace, harmony and complexity. Fine aromas of small berry fruit, violets, cola, dark spice and fresh licorice root peel off layer after layer. The wine shows excellent structure, with tight, firm tannins and a bright touch of acidity on the long finish. Imported by Wilson Daniels Ltd. —M.L.

93 Massimo Penna 2007 Sori Sartù (Barbaresco); \$NA. Here's a sophisticated and austere Barbaresco from the excellent 2007 vintage with an attractive garnet color backed by aromas of spice, mesquite, cedar and black fruit. The oak element is still overt, so give this wine five years of cellar aging. That wonderful intensity and acidity will ensure that it ages gracefully. —M.L.

93 Moccagatta 2007 Bric Balin (Barbaresco); \$NA. This gorgeous Barbaresco from the celebrated Bric Balin cru opens with natural heft and opulent layers of cherry, vanilla, wild berry, spice, old leather, chocolate and smoke. The wine's consistency is on the dark, heavy side and the feeling it imparts on the palate is one of richness and smoothness. A Marc de Grazia selection; various American importers. **Cellar Selection.** —M.L.

93 Montaribaldi 2007 Palazzina (Barbaresco); \$NA. Here's a big and brawny Barbaresco with loads of intensity and fruity pulp (as demonstrated by the wine's dark appearance). The wine moves thickly over the palate, imparting perfumed tones of church incense and wild berries along the way. It also offers tart, firm tannins and promises a long aging future ahead. Drink after 2015. **Cellar Selection.** —M.L.

93 Orlando Abrigo 2007 Vigna Rongalio Meruzzano (Barbaresco);

\$NA. From young vintner Giovanni Abrigo in the Treiso area, this is a lovely expression of Barbaresco with immediate aromas of cherry, cassis, spice, smoke, leather and tobacco. The wine is approachable now, but it's also built to last: natural concentration, bright fruit flavors and acidity will hold ten years or more. Imported by Ionia Atlantic. —M.L.

93 Pietro Rinaldi 2007 Vigna San Cristoforo (Barbaresco); \$45. Here's a bold and modern Nebbiolo from the San Cristoforo cru with a rich, extracted appearance followed by intense aromas of ripe cherry, spice, black licorice, slate roof and dried tobacco leaf. The tannins are dusty and drying but give excellent structure to the wine's overall richness and opulence. Imported by VinUS Inc. —M.L.

93 Sottimano 2007 Cottà (Barbaresco); \$55. Oak aging (with 25% new French barrel) has helped shape sweet aromas of vanilla and exotic spice backed by loads of cherry and ripe forest berry. Characteristic aromas of violets, wet earth and graphite appear at the back and the wine is firm, thick and smooth on the close. Consider long cellar aging: 10 years or more. Imported by Michael Skurnik Wines. **Cellar Selection.** —M.L.

93 Tenute Cisa Asinari dei Marchesi di Gresy 2005 Gaiun Martinenga (Barbaresco); \$85. This wine would make a great impression on an elegantly dressed table with a fine meat-based menu. The wine's natural structure and freshness make it very food friendly and its elegant aromas of cassis, small berry, cola and white truffle will evolve beautifully throughout your meal. Imported by Dalla Terra Winery Direct. —M.L.

93 Tenute Cisa Asinari dei Marchesi di Gresy 2005 Camp Gros Martinenga (Barbaresco); \$85. This special cru selection Barbaresco offers enormous intensity and persistency of flavor. This is a supremely elegant wine with ethereal aromas of cassis, tar, licorice and root beer. There's tannic structure and a fine texture here and the wine should age well for many more years. Imported by Dalla Terra Winery Direct. —M.L.

93 Ugo Lequio 2007 Gallina (Barbaresco); \$NA. Ugo Lequio offers one of the best expressions of Nebbiolo from the Gallina cru. His beautiful Barbaresco from Neive

delivers impressive extraction and aromatic intensity. The wine is rich and opulent with aromas of spice, wild berry, red rose, licorice and a touch of white truffle. The mouthfeel is smooth, elegant and the finish is long. Imported by Admiralty Beverage. —M.L.

92 Adriano Marco & Vittorio 2005 Basarin Riserva (Barbaresco); \$NA. Here's a generous, opulent Barbaresco Riserva with aromas of black cherry and soft vanilla. The wine is not overdone, but elegant: You'll detect soft hints of coffee and roasted almond as well and the tannins are tight and firm on the close. Imported by Monsieur Touton Selection Ltd. —M.L.

92 Angelo Negro & Figli 2007 Cascinotta (Barbaresco); \$NA. Here's a hefty, big expression of Nebbiolo with thick spice notes and touches of vanilla and cinnamon that sit over a core of bright fruit. The wine offers a soft quality of tannin, followed by tart freshness, resulting in a pleasurable sensation of richness and opulence on the palate. Drink now until 2018. Imported by Nardone Wine. —M.L.

92 Battaglio 2007 Barbaresco; \$NA. Mario Battaglio offers a truly fantastic expression of Nebbiolo from the hot 2007 vintage that is packed tight with intensity and larger than life aromatic opulence. In a surprise twist, the wine also boasts a feminine side thanks to delicate aromas of wild flowers, licorice and light graphite or mineral shadings. —M.L.

92 Bruno Rocca 2007 Barbaresco; \$NA. Bruno Rocca releases yet another beautiful Barbaresco. In the 2007, the wine delivers a hearty, genuine feel that is reflected in aromas of black fruit, spice, bresaola, wet earth and tar. The wine boasts a clean, fine texture with polished tannins and bright acidity. The finish is long and spice driven. Imported by Trilussa Wine Company. —M.L.

92 Cantina del Pino 2007 Barbaresco; \$47. Cantina del Pino delivers a stand-out base Barbaresco with a bright ruby color and distinct aromas of dried cassis, leather, tobacco, prune, chestnut honey and blue flower. The wine is packed with bright acidity and tight tannins for long aging. The complexity here is really very special. Imported by Artisan Wines, Inc.. —M.L.

92 Castello di Neive 2007 (Barbaresco); \$NA. Bright and tonic, this cheerful Barbaresco delivers pretty aromas of perfumed spice, wild flowers, licorice and light shadings of talc powder. In the mouth, it offers an especially smooth and silky feel. Pair this elegant wine with lamb chops topped with crispy fried shallots. —M.L.

92 Ceretto 2006 Bricco Asili Bernardot (Barbaresco); \$81. Bernardot is a bold and plump expression of Barbaresco with soft, ripe tannins and expressive aromatic layers of cherry, plum, prune and new leather. The elegance and detailed nature of Nebbiolo shines through but the emphasis here is on opulence and richness overall. Imported by Wilson Daniels Ltd. —M.L.

92 Cigliuti 2007 Vigne Erte (Barbaresco); \$67. Here's a rich and densely extracted Barbaresco from the Erte vineyard in Neive that will appeal to those who like a bigger, more extracted style of Nebbiolo. The wine is bursting with intense layers of black fruit, prune and plum followed by sweet tones of exotic spice. The mouthfeel is chewy, tart and very firm. Imported by Indigenous Selections. —M.L.

92 Elio Filippino 2007 San Cristoforo (Barbaresco); \$NA. Fully loaded and packed tight, this rich Barbaresco ushers forth aromas of ripe cherry, wet earth, smoked bacon, black stone and licorice. There's a strong spice element as well and the wine tastes thick and ripe in the mouth with firm, finely textured tannins. —M.L.

92 Fontanabianca 2007 Sorì Burdin (Barbaresco); \$60. There are some ripe notes here of black cherry and raspberry (2007 was a hot, dry vintage in Piedmont) but you'll also get territory-driven notes of wet earth and dried beef or bresaola. The mouthfeel is dry and firm thanks to the elegantly polished nature of the tannins. Imported by Tellitalia Imports. —M.L.

92 Michele Taliano 2007 Ad Altiora (Barbaresco); \$NA. Here's a nicely concentrated Barbaresco with distinct notes of tar, leather, asphalt and spice backed by softer notes of berry fruit, plum and prune. There's immense personality and power here with drying tannins and plump fruit on the close. —M.L.

92 Molino 2007 Ausario (Barbaresco); \$NA. This beautiful, vineyard-designate Barbaresco from the Ausario cru is marked by distinctive mineral notes of graphite and slate followed by pristine aromas of wild berries, tar and light smoke. The wine is plump, thick and enduring with highly polished tannins. Drink after 2015. Imported by Italia Wine Imports. —M.L.

92 Pelissero 2007 Nubiola (Barbaresco); \$38. Nebbiolo, the grape, and Nubiola, the designate name, stem from the same Italian word: nebbia, or "fog" that regularly blankets the Langhe. This bright Barbaresco is defined by a distinctive aroma of tar or freshly applied street asphalt that is typical of the variety. Additional aromas include back fruit, prune and plum. The mouthfeel is streamlined, tight and elegant. Imported by Vinifera Imports. —M.L.

92 Punset 2007 Basarin (Barbaresco); \$NA. The Basarin cru has performed very nicely in 2007 by absorbing the heat, but not in an exaggerated way. This expression opens with ripe fruit notes, black cherry and wild raspberries with elegant background tones of graphite, smoke and blue flower. The wine imparts an elegant and smooth feel thanks to the polished nature of its tannins. Imported by Zancanella Importing Co. —M.L.

92 Rattalino 2007 Quarantadue42 (Barbaresco); \$NA. A relative newcomer, Massimo Rattalino makes an impressive debut with this tasty Barbaresco. The wine is beautifully tonic with vibrant tones of rose, pressed flower, wild berries, almond skin, cinnamon and new leather. Those bright aromas are surrounded by drying graphite nuances, bright acidity and polished tannins. —M.L.

92 Tenute Cisa Asinari dei Marchesi di Gresy 2006 Martinenga (Barbaresco); \$50. The Martinenga cru selection of Barbaresco offers beautiful complexity and elegance with firm tones of red berry fruit, cassis, white truffle, cola and lingering aromas of exotic spice. Thanks to its freshness and fine tannins, this wine will easily age five to ten more years. Imported by Dalla Terra Winery Direct. —M.L.

92 Tenute Cisa Asinari dei Marchesi di Gresy 2007 Martinenga (Barbaresco); \$20. This intense and determined Nebbiolo from the Martinenga cru of Barbaresco delivers enticing aromas of black fruit, smoke,

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tar, licorice and old spice. The wine is elegant and ethereal with a polished nature to its firm tannins capped by pleasantly piquant freshness on the finish. Imported by Dalla Terra Winery Direct. —M.L.

91 Adriano Marco & Vittorio 2007 Basarin (Barbaresco); \$NA. This is a fully unique expression of Nebbiolo with distinct aromas of bacon fat, dried salami, bresaola and playful accents of black fruit and exotic spice. The intensity and power are terrific and the wine is tart, chewy and bright on the close. That inherent freshness makes a nice contrast to those heavier meaty aromas. Imported by Monsieur Touton Selection Ltd. —M.L.

91 Albino Rocca 2007 (Barbaresco); \$NA. This beautiful base Barbaresco from Albino Rocca (a family-run winery with 45 acres of vine) offers elegant and extremely floral aromas of blue flower, rose petal and cedar followed by bright shades of tar and licorice. The wine is firm and drying with polished tannins on the close. A Marc de Grazia selection; various American importers. —M.L.

91 Antichi Poderi dei Gallina 2007 Vigneto l'Ciaciaret (Barbaresco); \$NA. This is textbook Barbaresco from the well-received 2007 vintage. Vigneto l'Ciaciaret (the vineyard is part of the Gallina cru in Neive) offers a delicate embroidery of wild berry, spice and mineral aromas. The wine is rich and firm in the mouth with dusty, drying tannins. —M.L.

91 Ca' du Rabajà 2007 Rabajà (Barbaresco); \$52. Without a doubt one of the most successful vineyard crus in Barbaresco, Rabajà delivers unique intensity and sophistication. You'll notice aromas of black fruit, spice, tar and licorice and there's good balance between the wine's acidity and its tannic structure. Pair this wine with roasted pork stuffed with prunes. Imported by Rare Wine Company. —M.L.

91 Cantina del Nebbiolo 2007 Barbaresco; \$NA. Cantina del Nebbiolo is a cooperative winery with 175 members. This gorgeous base Barbaresco has been shaped by light wood influences that are integrated so well, they appear only as aromatic highlights over the wine's rich fruit component. There's spice, cinnamon and clove and the wine's mouthfeel is rich and continuous. —M.L.

91 Carlo Giacosa 2007 Montefico (Barbaresco); \$45. This impressive Barbaresco shows generous intensity and a very nice equilibrium between wild berry fruit and oak-driven tones of spice and tobacco. There's a fun touch of pepper and white truffle as well and the wine is compact, firm and elegant on the close. Imported by Angelini Wine. —M.L.

91 Cascina Luisin 2007 Sori Paolin (Barbaresco); \$55. This is a big Barbaresco executed in a bold, modern style that can either be consumed immediately, or can be put aside to age in your cellar. Soft layers of spice, nutmeg and vanilla are enhanced by bursting flavors of cherry and blueberry. The wine is rich, dense and opulent overall. Imported by Zig Zagando. —M.L.

91 Giacosa Fratelli 2007 Basarin Vigna Gianmatè (Barbaresco); \$52. This moderately oak-driven Barbaresco from the Basarin cru delivers rich layers of spice and vanilla lavished over wild berries and white cherries. The wine is silky and smooth with drying tannins on the close. Imported by Bedford International. —M.L.

91 La Ganghija 2007 (Barbaresco); \$NA. Focused aromas of tar, asphalt, wild berries and blue flowers open the nose of this bright and lively Barbaresco. The wine offers aromatic nuances that peel back slowly and seductively to reveal red fruit and spice. In the mouth, it delivers firm, drying tannins and bitter cherry. —M.L.

91 Marchesi di Barolo 2007 Serragrilli (Barbaresco); \$NA. Loads of crushed mineral—slate and white stone—characterize the bouquet at first but are soon followed by delicate aromas of cherry cola, balsam and exotic spice. The Serragrilli Barbaresco offers an intense and pristine aromatic presentation backed by thick extraction and dense opulence. Imported by Wine Wave. —M.L.

91 Negro Giuseppe 2007 Pian Cavallo (Barbaresco); \$NA. Pian Cavallo is a unique and distinct wine that will appeal to those who appreciate a bigger, more robust style of Barbaresco. The very intense bouquet brings forth aromas of perfume, scented candle and sweet Christmas spice. Bright fruit tones appear in the mouth along with firmly structured tannins that

will ensure a long aging future. Imported by IBESC Wine Distributor. —M.L.

91 Poderi Colla 2007 Roncaglie (Barbaresco); \$65. This is an extremely distinctive and site-specific expression of Barbaresco from the celebrated Roncaglie cru. The wine is characterized by feminine, delicate tones of subtle Indian spice, pressed rose petal, violets and light vanilla or white chocolate. It boasts well-integrated freshness and finely polished tannins. Imported by Empson (USA) Ltd. —M.L.

91 Punset 2007 Campo Quadro (Barbaresco); \$NA. Here's a rich, ripe expression of Barbaresco with loads of bright fruit followed by generous notes of exotic spice and scented candle. The wine is smooth, rich and drinkable almost immediately. Or, you could safely cellar this wine five years or more: the natural fruit promises to evolve evenly over the years. Imported by Zancanella Importing Co. —M.L.

91 Ressaia 2007 Canova (Barbaresco); \$NA. Here's a ripe expression of Nebbiolo from the dry and hot 2007 vintage. You'll recognize tones of cherry, raspberry and blackberry backed by loads of spice and leather. There's a tart feeling in the mouth and the tannins are firm and tight. —M.L.

91 Rivetti Massimo 2005 Serraboella Riserva (Barbaresco); \$NA. This Riserva Serraboella Barbaresco from the tricky 2005 vintage shows nice concentration and density backed by generous aromas of smoke, ripe cherry and smoked ham. There's a touch of overripe or candied fruit that only helps add to the overall intensity. In the mouth, this wine is silky and very smooth. Imported by Wine Emporium. —M.L.

91 Rivetti Massimo 2007 Froi (Barbaresco); \$NA. Here's an elegant and pure Barbaresco that delivers an aromatic embroidery of spice, wild berry, incense and sandalwood fragrances. The wine is firm and tart in the mouth, with an excellent balance between freshness and tannic structure. Imported by Wine Emporium. —M.L.

91 Sottimano 2007 Pajoré (Barbaresco); \$55. Sottimano makes five expressions of Barbaresco and this wine from the Pajoré cru delivers surprisingly ripe aromas of cherry, wild berries, white truffle, chopped herbs

and drying mineral. It's an elegant and refined wine with noticeable acidity and a sharp finish, yet the 2007 summer heat shows up in the wine's flavors and fleshy aromas. Imported by Michael Skurnik Wines. —M.L.

90 Adriano Marco & Vittorio 2007 Sanadaive (Barbaresco); \$NA. Here's a sharp, focused expression of Nebbiolo with aromas of caper and green olive backed by characteristic aromas of pressed violets, tar and spice. The wine is firm and drying in the mouth and shows the best traits of traditional, territory-driven Barbaresco. Imported by Monsieur Tonton Selection Ltd. —M.L.

90 Barale Fratelli 2007 Serraboella (Barbaresco); \$NA. The historic Barale Fratelli estate offers this bright Barbaresco from the Serraboella cru. The beautiful wine is pristine and tight with loads of berry fruit and spice. It's tart, spicy and clean on the finish. Pair it with ravioli with lamb-based meat sauce. Imported by Lo Duca Bros. —M.L.

90 Ca' del Baio 2007 Asili (Barbaresco); \$44. This pretty Barbaresco from the Asili cru offers bright fruit intensity with layers of white cherry, wild blueberry and plum. Those fresh tones are backed by softer shadings of smoke, spice and mineral. The wine is focused, sharp and firm on the long finish. Imported by Jan D'Amore Wines. —M.L.

90 Ca' du Rabajà 2007 (Barbaresco); \$24. Known for its panoramic, family-run bed & breakfast, Ca' du Rabajà's base Barbaresco offers a light, bright appearance with aromas of white chocolate, vanilla, orange zest and wild berry. There's smoke, licorice and tar in there as well and the wine offers a tart but drying finish. Imported by Rare Wine Company. —M.L.

90 Ca'Romè 2007 Söri Rio Sordo (Barbaresco); \$87. The 2007 Söri Rio Sordo is far more impressive than the 2006 edition. Warm temperatures and a long growing season have surely played an important part in developing the aromas of black fruit, sweet spice, plum and dried prune that come forward. The wine shows elegance and integration with a firm, unyielding tannic structure. Imported by Empson (USA) Ltd. —M.L.

90 Cascina Morassino 2007 Ovello (Barbaresco); \$45. The steep Ovello

vineyard overlooks the hilltop hamlet of Barbaresco and beautifully trellised countryside. This cru expression shows aromas of spice, mesquite, cedar, clove and black fruit. In addition, there are distinguishable aromas of blue flower and green olive, backed by silky tannins and a smooth but drying finish. Imported by Fourcade & Hecht Wine Selections. —M.L.

90 Cascina Saria 2007 (Barbaresco); \$30. Cascina Saria is a relatively new producer in the Langhe, although the family has been growing grapes for generations. This Barbaresco shows tart aromas of berry fruit and white cherry, but it also offers accents of red apple, spice, wet earth and smoked bacon. There's more heft and consistency in the mouth, and the fruit flavors show the thick and chewy qualities of a hot vintage. Imported by Baldocchino Fine Wines. —M.L.

90 Castello di Verduno 2007 Rabajà (Barbaresco); \$65. Here's a very elegant and ethereal expression of Nebbiolo with measured aromatic accents of drying mineral, wild berries and Indian spice. This is a delicate and feminine wine with freshness, tartness and a very fine quality of tannin. Imported by Oliver McCrum Wines. —M.L.

90 Ceretto 2006 Asij (Barbaresco); \$45. A little sister to the estate's more expensive Bricco Asili cru expression of Barbaresco, this tonic, clean and firm wine is redolent of black currant, cherry cola, wild raspberry, violets, tar and Spanish cedar. It's a firm, determined and polished wine. Imported by Wilson Daniels Ltd. —M.L.

90 Eredi Lodali 2007 Lorens (Barbaresco); \$75. Winemakers for many long generations, the Lodali family (now with Walter Lodali at the helm) is slowly penetrating the international wine consciousness. The 2007 Lorens Barbaresco offers pronounced aromas of smoke, tobacco, tar and licorice embellished by red rose and violet. The wine is smooth, silky with polished tannins and an elegant finish. Imported by Siema LLC. —M.L.

90 Francone 2007 I Patriarchi (Barbaresco); \$NA. Fragrant and delicate, with aromas of blue flower, scented candle, forest berry, earth and perfume, this Barbaresco shows the ethereal nature of Nebbiolo. It performs beautifully in the mouth thanks to the smooth,

silky tannins. Imported by De Benedetto Imports. —M.L.

90 Fratelli Casetta 2005 Riserva (Barbaresco); \$NA. This Riserva Barbaresco from the warm 2005 vintage delivers subtle hints of wild berry and cassis backed by white truffle and earthy tones. At the far back are aromas of dried beef or smoked ham and the wine would pair well with veal in cream sauce. The acidity and tannins should keep your palate refreshed. Imported by Sober LLC. —M.L.

90 Giacosa Fratelli 2007 Basarin (Barbaresco); \$52. You'll love this traditional expression of Barbaresco and its excellent balancing act between the elegance of its natural fruit aromas and the spicy oak-related tones that embellish it. There's a touch of raw fruit or citrus zest as well and the wine closes in a silky, smooth fashion. Imported by Bedford International. —M.L.

90 Giacosa Fratelli 2005 Basarin Vigna Gianmaté (Barbaresco); \$52. This vineyard-designate Barbaresco shows refined aromas of currant, cassis, tar, licorice, white truffle and root beer. This wine offers balance and intensity with a firm tannic close. Drink after 2015. Imported by Bedford International. —M.L.

90 Giuseppe Cortese 2007 Rabajà (Barbaresco); \$50. Giuseppe Cortese's bold Barbaresco from the Rabajà cru shows a strong bouquet of spice, liquid smoke, mesquite and cola. The natural fruit appears at the back and the wine carries over the palate with enormous freshness and intensity. Imported by Winebow. —M.L.

90 Michele Chiarlo 2007 Asili (Barbaresco); \$40. The Asili cru is always a top performer, and although this vintage from acclaimed winemaker Michele Chiarlo is excellent, it's not quite outstanding. There's a hint of apple skin or orange zest that imparts a buoyant and immediate disposition. It's tight and bright with fresh acidity but could use a little more pulp to carry it through the years. Imported by Kobrand. —M.L.

90 Molino 2007 Teorema (Barbaresco); \$NA. Here's a powerful and intense Barbaresco with tones of cherry liqueur, spice, licorice, leather and espresso coffee. The

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wine shows good concentration and excellent persistency of flavor with lingering nuances of spice and berry with bright acidity and dry tannins. Imported by Italia Wine Imports. —M.L.

90 Montaribaldi 2007 Sorì Montaribaldi (Barbaresco); \$NA. With 47 acres of vine, the Taliano family presents a thickly concentrated expression of Nebbiolo with pulpy fruit notes of cassis and blackberry. There's a bit of smoked ham, wet earth, vanilla and white truffle in there as well and the wine closes with a dense, velvety finish. —M.L.

90 Pertinace 2007 Marcarini (Barbaresco); \$49. Garnet ruby with orange highlights—characteristic coloring of the Nebbiolo grape—give this wine an elegant, classic appearance. Aromas focus on dried berries, spice and licorice and the wine is polished, smooth and firm in the mouth. Pair it with braised meat or lamb stew. Imported by MW Imports. —M.L.

90 Piazzi Armando 2007 Fratin (Barbaresco); \$40. Graphite notes of pencil shaving, polished river stone and slate make for a beautifully mineral-driven nose. You'll also get very ripe notes of cherry and raspberry backed by opulent shadings of new leather and black tar. Imported by Angelini Wine. —M.L.

90 Piazzi Armando 2005 Nervo Vigna Giaia Riserva (Barbaresco); \$45. This Riserva Barbaresco presents thick extraction and an orange tinge to its garnet-ruby color. Aromas here recall spice, earth, tar, licorice and subtle fresh fruit nuances. The natural acidity and bone-dry tannins suggest this wine should stay lively for more years to come. Imported by Angelini Wine. —M.L.

90 Produttori del Barbaresco 2005 Pora Riserva (Barbaresco); \$70. Here's a bright and very polished Riserva Barbaresco with clean and focused aromas of white cherry, cola, wild berries and dried currants. This expression from the Pora cru (known for its cellar-worthy wines) shows good acidity and drying tannins. Imported by Vias Imports. —M.L.

90 Produttori del Barbaresco 2006 (Barbaresco); \$35. This historic producer sources some of the best local fruit for its elegant Barbaresco. Aromas include cassis, dried blueberry and cola, but there's also a good dose

of licorice, spice and dark smoke. The wine shows excellent texture with firm, drying tannins and a bright, polished feel. Imported by Vias Imports. —M.L.

90 Produttori del Barbaresco 2007 (Barbaresco); \$37. Smoke, barbecue and tar emerge from the nose of this ethereal and elegant Barbaresco. You'll also get delicate fruity notes of pressed wild berries and white cherry. The wine is tart and fresh with drying tannins and a polished feel. Pair it with boiled beef and mint sauce. Imported by Vias Imports. —M.L.

90 Rizzi 2007 Pajoré (Barbaresco); \$58. This unique Barbaresco delivers power and personality with aromas of cherry liqueur, tar, asphalt, mesquite and slight touches of barbecue smoke. More than fruity aromas, you get floral ones here, especially red rose and violet. In the mouth, the wine is silky, tight and fresh. Imported by Opici Import Company. —M.L.

90 Terre da Vino 2007 La Casa in Collina (Barbaresco); \$NA. Terre da Vino is a massive presence in the Langhe, representing some 11,000 acres of vines and 2,500 growers. The winery produces excellent Barbera and classic expressions of Barbaresco like this wine. Aromas include red berries, wild flowers, tar, licorice and spice. The wine is polished, clean, persistent and focused. Imported by International Wine Traders. —M.L.

89 Antica Casa Vinicola Scarpa 2007 Tettineive (Barbaresco); \$NA. Tettineive Barbaresco shows nice integration of wood and fruit. The wine offers elegance over intensity and although all the aromas are clean and correct, there is a slight point of dried dill or chopped herb in the background. —M.L.

89 Ca' del Baio 2007 Valgrande (Barbaresco); \$44. Here's an up-and-coming Langhe producer who has already made a big splash with the Italian wine press. Valgrande is the estate's most traditional Barbaresco aged in big oak casks. This vintage offers mature notes of wild berries and plum followed by elegant shadings of pipe tobacco and old spice. It shows medium persistency with drying tannins. Imported by Jan D'Amore Wines. —M.L.

89 Cascina Luisin 2007 Rabajà (Barbaresco); \$26. This Barbaresco from the celebrated Rabajà cru presents aromas that

are typical of the Nebbiolo grape: pressed blue flowers, tar, licorice, currants and wet earth. The presentation is correct but lacks specific definition although the wine is bright, polished and more focused in the mouth. Imported by Zig Zagando. —M.L.

89 La Spinona 2007 Bricco Faset (Barbaresco); \$NA. Smoke, toast, mesquite and barbecue tones emerge from the nose of this nicely concentrated Barbaresco from La Spinona. There's not much fruit here as the wine's aromas are mostly occupied by the secondary perfumes acquired through wood aging. Expect those to evolve and become more ethereal with time. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd. —M.L.

89 Pasquale Pelissero 2007 Bricco San Giuliano (Barbaresco); \$30. This is a delicate, feminine expression of Nebbiolo with pretty layers of spice and forest fruit surrounded by tar, graphite and white stone. In the mouth, the wine is firm and fresh. There is a slightly tart or raw note that will soften with more time in the bottle. Imported by Grape Expectations (CA). —M.L.

89 Pertinace 2007 Vigneto Nervo (Barbaresco); \$49. From the Vigneto Nervo cru of Barbaresco, this well-concentrated wine delivers notes of dark spice, leather, tobacco, mesquite wood and oak. The natural aromas associated with Nebbiolo are still buried, so give this wine time to unwind with a few more years of cellar aging. In the mouth, it shows soft, meaty fruit with a smooth, velvety texture. Imported by MW Imports. —M.L.

89 Produttori del Barbaresco 2005 Rio Sordo Riserva (Barbaresco); \$70. Black spice, root beer, tar and a touch of smoke are backed by prune, plum and dried currants. You'll also recognize aromas of green olive or caper and this Riserva Barbaresco is very elegant and feminine overall. Don't wait too long to drink this wine, it's at its height now. Imported by Vias Imports. —M.L.

89 Prunotto 2007 (Barbaresco); \$50. With fruit sourced from Barbaresco, Treiso and Neive, this elegant wine will surprise you with its aromatic intensity. Bright aromas of cinnamon, clove, black pepper and mature currant pop out on the nose. Subtle shades of licorice, prune and tobacco appear in the back-

ground and the wine is bright, firm and enduring in the mouth. Imported by Winebow. —M.L.

89 Rizzi 2007 Nervo Fondetta (Barbaresco); \$49. The Rizzi family of Barbaresco does amazing work with its specific vineyard crus. One of its best sites is the Fondetta vineyard, although this vintage seems more nervous and raw than in past years. Clover, spice and green capers are some of the more interesting aromatic characteristics of this wine. You'll also get bright fruit and lemon zest on the close. Imported by Opici Import Company. —M.L.

88 Bel Colle 2007 Roncaglie (Barbaresco); \$53. This bright Barbaresco aged in oak and chestnut barrel shows focused aromas of cherry, wild berry and white almond backed by spice and leather. The intensity of the aromas is not huge, but the wine is compact and neatly focused overall. Drink it with pheasant or game hen. Imported by Aventine Hill LLC. —M.L.

88 Bricco Grilli 2007 Serragrilli (Barbaresco); \$NA. This Barbaresco from the Serragrilli cru in Neive delivers raw notes of Spanish cedar, chopped fruit and carrot backed by touches of citrus zest and cola. The wine is ripe, chewy and thick in the mouth with a velvety finish. —M.L.

88 Cascina delle Rose 2007 Tre Stelle (Barbaresco); \$68. Here's a light and elegant Barbaresco from the 2007 vintage with focused tones of spice, orange rind, tobacco and drying mineral. The wine is thin and compact with bright acidity that makes for an excellent match to oven-roasted pasta with delicate veal ragù. Imported by George Wines. —M.L.

88 Cascina Morassino 2007 Morassino (Barbaresco); \$57. Here's a genuine and fresh expression of Barbaresco with loads of fruit-driven aromas including cherry, cassis, raspberry and fresh plum. There's great acidity and brightness too and the wine finishes with tart berry flavor on the close. Imported by Fourcade & Hecht Wine Selections. —M.L.

88 Dante Rivetti 2005 Bricco Riserva (Barbaresco); \$56. This Riserva expression of Barbaresco opens with a light ruby color and charred aromas of wood, spice and smoke. You'll also identify cherry cola, tar, licorice

and violet. The mouthfeel is silky with an enduring impression of smoked meat flavors on the finish. Imported by Vinifera Imports. —M.L.

88 Grasso Fratelli 2007 Valleggrande (Barbaresco); \$NA. Here is a very nicely balanced Barbaresco with sweet spice notes and plump fruit tones of wild berry, cherry and blackberry. What the wine offers in harmony, it lacks in overt intensity: it shows flat, broad character in the mouth with wet earth and mineral tones on the finish. —M.L.

88 La Ca' Nova 2007 Montestefano (Barbaresco); \$52. Three brothers, Pietro, Giulio and Franco, collaborate on this garnet-colored Barbaresco with classic Nebbiolo fragrances of wet earth, wild berries and pressed violets. The aromatic nuances are a bit muddled at first but the wine's mouthfeel is bright and fresh. Imported by Tricana Imports. —M.L.

88 Nada Giuseppe 2005 Casot Riserva (Barbaresco); \$NA. This light and compact Barbaresco Riserva offers ethereal notes of spice, root beer, white berry and wet earth. There's a hint of clove, cinnamon and natural rubber as well and the wine is smooth, polished and firm on the close. Imported by Bayfield Importing Ltd. —M.L.

87 Cascina delle Rose 2007 Rio Sordo (Barbaresco); \$64. This tight and firm Barbaresco from the Rio Sordo cru exhibits an orange tinge to its garnet color and shows aromas of licorice, exotic spice, old leather and dried tobacco leaf. The wine seems older than it actually is, but those polished tannins should pull it forward a few more years at least. Imported by George Wines. —M.L.

87 Vigin 2007 Noemy (Barbaresco); \$NA. Founded by Orlando Viglino in 1947 and now run by grandson Davide, Vigin produces a light, garnet-colored Barbaresco with sharp aromatic accents that include red apple, tar, wet earth, slate and mineral tones backed by plum and dried prune. It offers bright acidity, firm tannins and a thin consistency. Imported by Domace Vino. —M.L.

84 Feyles 2007 Barbaresco; \$NA. This Barbaresco opens with an awkward aroma of bruised apple skin followed by cola, lemon zest and spice. From an aromatic point of view, the wine makes a direct and immediate

impact and in the mouth, it imparts gritty, earthy-tasting tannins. —M.L.

ROERO

89 Cascina Chicco 2006 Valmaggiore Riserva (Roero); \$38. Here's a ripe and soft expression of Roero Riserva with jammy notes of strawberry and raspberry folded within drying aromas of black mineral and exotic spice. Those telltale tannins are present although this expression is slightly more supple and plush. Imported by Vinifera Imports. —M.L.

89 Giovanni Almondo 2006 Giovanni Almondo Riserva (Roero); \$NA. This Roero Riserva delivers a sophisticated nose with deep layers of spice, dark fruit and pressed flowers. The wine is bright and clean in the mouth with extremely drying tannins and lingering smoke and toast nuances. —M.L.

89 Matteo Correggia 2006 Roche d'Ampsej Riserva (Roero); \$NA. Wood tones of leather, spice and tobacco are folded within dark berry fruit, cassis and blue flower to create a well-rounded and balanced Roero Riserva. You still get those distinctively drying tannins on the close although this expression puts more emphasis on softness and succulence. A Marc de Grazia selection; various American importers. —M.L.

88 Angelo Negro & Figli 2006 Sudisfà Riserva (Roero); \$NA. Smoke, ash and graphite notes form an elegant frame to wild berries, orange zest and blue flowers. Cherry wood and mesquite appear in the mouth and the wine is capped by tight, drying tannins. Imported by Nardone Wine. —M.L.

88 Cascina Cà Rossa 2007 Audinaggio (Roero); \$39. This Roero offers very good intensity of aromas that are characterized by layers of white cherry, wild berry and exotic spice. The wine offers a soft, velvety feel in the mouth although those tight tannins definitely appear on the close. Imported by Vinity Wine Company. —M.L.

88 Cascina Val del Prete 2007 Bricco Medica (Roero); \$46. Bricco Medica Roero offers beautiful aromas of blue flowers, tangerine skin and cassis berry. It's a tad softer than other expressions although the finish is tan-

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nic and drying. Imported by Vinity Wine Company. —M.L.

88 Malabaila 2006 Castelletto Riserva (Roero); \$NA. Roasted espresso bean, leather and spice open the nose and are followed by cherry and cassis. There's also a perfumed, scented quality but the tannins are extremely dry and tight. —M.L.

87 Brizzo del Prete 2007 Betlemme (Roero); \$NA. Aromas of wild berry, floral notes and light spice shadings make for a very nice balance. The wine is tannic, dry and raw in the mouth. It should be paired with melted chèvre cheese on baguette. —M.L.

87 Cascina Cà Rossa 2006 Monpissano Riserva (Roero); \$45. Bone dry and extremely tannic, this Roero Riserva offers interesting notes of wild berries, candied fruit, orange zest and wild flowers. It's tight, firm and sharp on the palate. Imported by Vinity Wine Company. —M.L.

87 Cascina Chicco 2007 Montespino (Roero); \$32. Medium in build and concentration, this perfumed Roero exhibits tones of pressed violets, tealeaf, forest fruit and wet earth. Pair this wine with buttery or cheesy foods that will benefit from the naturally high tannins and acidity. Imported by Vinifera Imports. —M.L.

87 Cornarea 2007 Roero; \$29. Blue flowers, violets and red roses open the nose of this nicely concentrated Roero. Beyond the floral notes are tight berry nuances and bright acidity. Imported by Tesori Wines. —M.L.

87 Deltetto 2006 Braja Riserva (Roero); \$NA. Coffee bean, leather and tobacco tones are surrounded by delicate aromas of wild berry, violet and spice. The tannins are tight and bone dry, making for a good pairing with cheese fondue. Imported by Casa Bruno. —M.L.

87 Fratelli Casetta 2006 Riserva (Roero); \$NA. Dark concentration and soft aromas of cherry and spice open the nose with bright determination. They are segued by leather, ash and sweet tobacco. This naturally tannic wine leaves your mouth bone dry. Imported by Sober LLC. —M.L.

87 Giovanni Almondo 2007 Bric Valdiana (Roero); \$NA. Sweet and ripe tones of raspberry and black cherry help soften this naturally tannic and sharp wine from northern Italy. There are loads of perfumed and floral notes as well and firm tannins seal the close. —M.L.

87 Lorenzo Negro 2006 San Francesco Riserva (Roero); \$NA. This tonic and tight Roero Riserva offers aromas of wild berry, white almond and rose petal backed by drying tannins and bright acidity. Pair it with butter or cheese-based pasta dishes. —M.L.

87 Marsaglia 2007 Brich d'America (Roero); \$NA. This Roero benefits from an added layer of spice, clove and cinnamon that sits tight over floral notes and wild berries (a tiny percent of Barbera is added to the blend). There's a charred, smoky tone in the mouth and the finish is tight but firm. —M.L.

87 Michele Taliano 2006 Roche dra Bossora Riserva (Roero); \$NA. Here's a very ripe expression of Roero Riserva with jammy aromas of strawberry and blueberry. The softness of the mature fruit, however, is tightly pulled back by the natural dryness and bitterness of the Nebbiolo tannins. —M.L.

87 Monchiero Carbone 2006 Printi Riserva (Roero); \$NA. This Roero Riserva boasts a light, elegant appearance with defined aromas of citrus zest, pressed flowers and wild blueberries. The tight, drying tannins would pair well with aged cheese or creamy sauces. Imported by Scoperta Importing Co. Inc. —M.L.

87 Ponchione Maurizio 2007 Monfrini (Roero); \$NA. Perfumed Indian tea and jasmine open the nose of this garnet-colored Nebbiolo-based Roero. The wine is tonic, tart, with tight tannins and lingering spice notes on the close. Imported by Ideal Wine and Spirits Co. Inc. —M.L.

86 Bel Colle 2007 Monvije (Roero); \$NA. Perfumed aromas of incense and scented candle emerge from the nose of this garnet-colored Roero. Tight tannins and bright acidity close the deal. —M.L.

86 Cantina del Nebbiolo 2007 Roero; \$NA. Light graphite notes of pencil shaving and slate roof come on the heels of wild

berries, orange zest and powdered licorice. Shadings of ash and smoke liven the mouth but the finish is exceedingly tannic and dry. —M.L.

86 Monchiero Carbone 2007 Srubio (Roero); \$NA. Here's a Nebbiolo-based Roero with dark concentration and rich aromas of spice, blackberry, earth and loads of perfumed church incense. It's prickly fresh in the mouth with a bitter, tannic close. Imported by Scoperta Importing Co. Inc. —M.L.

86 Negro Angelo e Figli 2007 Prachiosso (Roero); \$NA. Light in density, this fresh Roero exhibits aromas of orange zest and tangerine skin on top of pressed blue flowers and wild berries. The wine is sharp, tannic and firm on the palate. Imported by Nardone Wine. —M.L.

85 Careglio 2007 Roero; \$NA. Light in appearance with ruby highlights, this Roero delivers easy aromas of tar, cassis, rose and licorice. The wine is light, fresh and sharp with a lean, watery finish. —M.L.

85 Malvirà 2006 Trinità Riserva (Roero); \$NA. This is a light, compact Roero Riserva (made with Nebbiolo grapes) that shows drying tannins and sharp aromas of wild berry, citrus zest and white almond. Imported by Trilussa Wine Company. —M.L.

85 Rabino 2007 Roero; \$NA. This Roero offers bright aromatic highlights of forest berry, blue flower, orange zest, lead pencil and spice—all delivered in lively, steady pulses. In the mouth, the wine is enduring, tart and firm. —M.L.

84 Fabrizio Battaglini 2007 Sergentin (Roero); \$NA. There's a bitter aroma here of red apple skin and apricot fruit followed by citrus blossom, ash and licorice. Pair this tart Roero with butter pastry stuffed with cheese and cubed ham. —M.L.

84 Malvirà 2006 Renesio Riserva (Roero); \$NA. A touch of apple skin and orange zest opens this light, garnet-colored Riserva Roero. You'll also get tar, licorice and spice. The wine shows characteristic Nebbiolo astringency in the mouth. Imported by Trilussa Wine Company. —M.L.

84 Marco Porello 2007 Torretta (Roero); \$15. This Roero from the Canale area of Piedmont exhibits lactic notes of creamy spice and cinnamon yogurt over ripe berry and earthy tones. The mouthfeel is slightly bitter and sharp. Imported by Martin Scott Wines. —M.L.

84 Pace 2006 Riserva (Roero); \$NA. Meaty tones of beef broth and smoked bacon are folded within darker tones of black cherry and currant. You'll also get a touch of wet earth and black truffle. Thanks to its bigger concentration, the wine is slight chewy and succulent in addition to being firmly tannic. —M.L.

OTHER NEBBIOLO WINES

90 Cascina Corte di Barosi Alessandro 2007 Nebbiolo (Langhe); \$25. Made with organically grown grapes, this silky and elegant expression of Nebbiolo offers a youthful interpretation of the grape with bright berry notes of cassis, currant and wild raspberry backed by austere aromas of tar, licorice and leather. Imported by Casa Bruno. —M.L.

90 Giacomo Vico 2008 Nebbiolo (Langhe); \$21. Presented in extremely elegant packaging, this is a beautiful expression of Nebbiolo from Piedmont. Not as austere as Barolo or Barbaresco, this wine does offer familiar aromas of black currant, pressed violets, tar, licorice and leather. The wine is smooth, silky and structured on the close. Imported by Vino LeFebvre. —M.L.

90 Vietti 2006 Perbacco Nebbiolo (Langhe); \$25. Perbacco is a beautiful expression of Nebbiolo with soft, linear harmony and well defined aromas of black fruit, cola, spice and leather. It tastes compact and firm on the tongue and offers a long, delicious finish. Imported by Dalla Terra Winery Direct. —M.L.

88 Anna Maria Abbona 2006 Nebbiolo (Langhe); \$25. Here's an informal expression of Nebbiolo from young vines with tight aromas of pressed blue flowers, licorice, dried currants and cherry cola. The wine shows both a healthy acidic and tannic component and could pair with braised pork or lamb. Imported by Oliver McCrum Wines. —M.L.

88 Pioiero 2007 Nebbiolo d'Alba; \$29. Here's an easy-drinking expression of Nebbiolo that sees 12 months of wood aging in large oak casks for extra spice and tobacco on the finish. Otherwise, the freshness of the fruit is what you taste here backed by bright acidity and firm tannins. Imported by Enotec Imports, Inc. —M.L.

88 Tenute Cisa Asinari dei Marchesi di Gresy 2008 Nebbiolo d'Alba; \$21. This light and luminous Nebbiolo d'Alba offers fine aromas of cranberry, raspberry, white chocolate and root beer. Instead of huge complexity, you get good structure, freshness and a wine with a natural ability to pair with most easy meat dishes. Imported by Dalla Terra Winery Direct. —M.L.

87 Cascina Bruciata 2007 Usignolo Nebbiolo (Langhe); \$20. Aged only in stainless steel, Usignolo is a no-fuss expression of Nebbiolo that presents direct and friendly aromas of small berry fruit and blue flowers without the aged complexity of Barbaresco or Barolo. This would drink well with pizza or informal pasta dishes. Imported by Villa Italia. —M.L.

87 Giacosa Fratelli 2007 Nebbiolo d'Alba; \$16. This bright and fruit-forward Nebbiolo d'Alba offers clean notes of white cherry, raspberry and cassis. There's a subtle layer of tar, spice and licorice and the wine is fresh and well structured overall. Imported by Bedford International. —M.L.

87 Produttori del Barbaresco 2008 Nebbiolo (Langhe); \$20. Clean, simple and correct, this wine offers an excellent window into the Nebbiolo grape. From a young vintage and free of the aromas and textures associated with long aging in wood, this bright wine focuses on quality of fruit and fresh berry aromas backed by crispness and good structure. Imported by Vias Imports. —M.L.

BARBERA

91 Tenuta Olim Bauda 2007 Barbera d'Asti Superiore Nizza; \$39. Here's a big, bold interpretation of Barbera that sees 18 months of careful aging in oak to achieve aromas of black spice, cassis syrup, cola, mesquite and cedar. You can taste the youthfulness and the freshness of the fruit in the palate, and the wine

ends with persistency and a silky texture. Imported by US Wine Imports. —M.L.

90 Cigliuti 2007 Campass (Barbera d'Alba); \$NA. This is a gorgeous expression of Barbera with deeply sophisticated notes of exotic spice, smoke and toast that follow bursting notes of ripe fruit and blackberry. At first the wine feels soft and velvety on the palate and then that telltale acidity kicks in at the end. Imported by David Vincent Selection. —M.L.

90 Coppo 2004 Riserva della Famiglia (Barbera d'Asti Superiore Nizza); \$163. This beautiful Riserva della Famiglia offers immense sophistication and density with loads of spice, dark fruit and oak-related aromas. It is unlike any other Barbera you will taste thanks to the depth of its complexity and its overall intensity. Imported by Winebow. —M.L.

90 Massimiliano Vivalda 2004 Amistà (Barbera d'Asti Superiore); \$30. This Superiore's winning card is intensity and you'll feel it in its aromas of cherry, blackberry and spice as well as in the ripeness of the fruit here. In fact, those mature berry flavors provide a nice contrast to the wine's bright acidity. Imported by Testa Wines Of The World. —M.L.

89 Bracco Maiolica 2007 Vigna Vigia (Barbera d'Alba); \$35. An immediate and vertical delivery of cherry cola, spice and blackberry aromas makes this a very likeable Barbera d'Alba on first impact. Those good vibes continue to the mouth where the wine is dense, fresh and crisp. Imported by Zig Zagando. —M.L.

89 Cigliuti 2007 Serraboella (Barbera d'Alba); \$32. Black notes of spice, plum and ripe prune emerge from the nose of this concentrated and rich expression of Barbera from Alba. The Serraboella interpretation puts a lot of emphasis on the freshness and overall quality of the fruit. Imported by Indigenous Selections. —M.L.

89 Dacapo 2006 Vigna Dacapo (Barbera d'Asti Superiore Nizza); \$30. This bright and luscious Barbera offers a full range of aromas that span from blueberry to elegant smoke and exotic spice. The wine ends with a fresh, crisp finish but there's also good density and fullness here on the close. Imported by Zig Zagando. —M.L.

BUYING | GUIDE

89 Gianni Gagliardo 2006 La Matta (Barbera d'Alba); \$40. La Matta is a dark and sophisticated Barbera d'Alba with loads of oak intensity (spice, vanilla and cinnamon) backed by blackberry, currants and plum. Characteristic acidity kicks in on the close and keeps the palate refreshed. Imported by Enotec Imports, Inc. —M.L.

89 Gianni Voerzio 2008 Ciabot della Luna (Barbera d'Alba); \$25. This is a clean and polished expression of Barbera with loads of fresh fruit intensity as well as a sophisticated dose of spice, leather and tar. The wine is bright and crisp in the mouth and would pair with any sort of cheesy pasta dish. Imported by BelVino LLC. —M.L.

89 La Girona di Galandrino 2006 Le Nicchie (Barbera d'Asti Superiore Nizza); \$35. This Barbera from the Nizza sub-zone opens with penetrating aromas of black fruit, blueberry, chocolate and spice. The wine shows bright acidity and a rich texture that would pair with cheesy pizza topped with sausage. Imported by Eurobiz Inc. —M.L.

89 Prunotto 2006 Pian Romualdo (Barbera d'Alba); \$41. There's a very ripe element that emerges as jammy blackberry and black currant on the generous bouquet of this lively wine. Barbera is a grape with a high level of natural acidity and those mature fruit nuances help soften the sharpness. Imported by Winebow. —M.L.

88 Bava 2000 Stradivario (Barbera d'Asti Superiore); \$68. Due to its older age, this is a difficult wine to evaluate. Barbera is usually released young and fresh and is intended as a companion to pizza, pasta and other easy foods. This wine, on the other hand, shows sophisticated aromas of dried currant, leather, cola and spice. Imported by Wine Wave. —M.L.

88 Damilano 2009 Barbera d'Asti; \$19. This youthful expression of Barbera comes forth with ripe and raw aromas of black fruit, plum, prune and wild berries. You really feel the freshness of the fruit here and this wine would pair perfectly with pasta or pizza. Imported by Vias Imports. —M.L.

88 Poderi Luigi Einaudi 2008 Barbera (Piedmont); \$39. Attractive and inviting notes of black fruit, cherry and spice charac-

terize the bouquet of this dark ruby Barbera. The grape's acidity makes for a clean finish and would match any pasta dish that includes cheese or butter. Imported by Empson (USA) Ltd. —M.L.

88 Terre da Vino 2008 La Luna e l Falò (Barbera d'Asti Superiore); \$16. A ripe and rich Barbera d'Asti Superiore with pleasantly inviting aromas of ripe blackberry, Maraschino cherry and exotic spice. All those aromatic layers are washed clean over the palate thanks to the wine's fresh acidity that kicks in on the finish. Imported by International Wine Traders. —M.L.

87 Bricco Maiolica 2008 Barbera d'Alba; \$20. There's a lot of personality in this light and buoyant expression of Barbera d'Alba. The fresh wine is not weighed down by too much spice or ripe fruit and would pair with pasta and tomato sauce or grilled sausage. Imported by Zig Zagando. —M.L.

87 Cantine San Silvestro 2008 Aleramico (Barbera d'Asti); \$15. Aged in large oak casks, Aleramico Barbera d'Asti offers sweet aromas of vanilla and cinnamon behind notes of mature fruit, plum and blackberry. The wine shows rich, ripe consistency and loads of sweet fruit on the close. Imported by BelVino LLC. —M.L.

87 Cantine Volpi 2007 Vobis Tua (Barbera d'Asti); \$12. This luscious Barbera d'Asti shows plump aromas of black cherry and blackberry backed by lighter tones of spice and tobacco. You'll feel the freshness of the acidity and will want to pair this wine with cheesy pasta al forno. Imported by Bedford International. **Best Buy.** —M.L.

87 Carlin De Paolo 2007 Ad Libitum (Barbera d'Asti Superiore); \$19. Ad Libitum opens with a particularly spicy nose with tones of clove, crushed black pepper and ripe fruit or plum. It offers soft, ripe fruit nuances in the mouth and could pair with marinated pork or lamb. Imported by American Northwest Distributors Inc. —M.L.

87 Dacapo 2007 Sanbastian (Barbera d'Asti); \$15. Here's a focused expression of Barbera (aged only in stainless steel) that opens with bright notes of cherry, cassis, blackberry and a touch of prune. Those fresh fruit fla-

vors are backed by crisp acidity. Imported by Zig Zagando. —M.L.

87 Massimiliano Vivalda 2006 'l Clumbé (Barbera d'Asti); \$18. This lively Barbera d'Asti offers great integrity of fruit with pristine aromas of cherry, blueberry, tart raspberry and a touch of spice. The wine is smooth, crisp and closes with medium persistency. Imported by Testa Wines Of The World. —M.L.

87 Pe're Alessandro 2007 Barbera d'Alba; \$17. This Barbera d'Alba opens with moderate, less exaggerated aromas of ripe fruit, prunes and plums. There's also a very distinct oak note at the back that resembles Spanish cedar or mesquite. It does, however, offer nice pulp and succulence on the finish. Imported by Vintwood International Ltd. —M.L.

87 Prinsi 2007 Vigneto Much (Barbera d'Alba Superiore); \$29. Barbera Vigneto Much showcases sweet aromas of vanilla, cinnamon and cedar wood behind loads of black fruit and wild berries. The wine is lean and compact on the close with a very cleansing, fresh finish. Imported by Enotec Imports, Inc. —M.L.

87 Prunotto 2008 Barbera d'Alba; \$18. Clean, polished and pristine, this bright Barbera is redolent of cherry, blackberry, wet earth, dried leather and cola. The wine is fresh, tonic and would pair with cheesy quiche Lorraine. Imported by Winebow. —M.L.

87 Rizzi 2008 Barbera d'Alba; \$18. Rizzi's 2008 Barbera d'Alba delivers a fresh, slightly raw note of raspberry or wild berry surrounded by light shadings of spice and smoke. This is a balanced wine with bright fruit tones and fresh acidity that showcases a clean, traditional style. Imported by Opici Import Company. —M.L.

87 Tenuta Arnulfo 2008 Costa di Bussia (Barbera d'Alba); \$15. Here's a light, fragrant and bright Barbera (aged in large oak casks) that shows crisp acidity and lively aromas of red berry, cranberry and spice cake. Pair this wine with baked tomatoes stuffed with goat cheese and oregano. Imported by Siena Imports. —M.L.

87 Tenuta La Meridiana 2008 Le Gaggie (Barbera d'Asti); \$19. Here a

fun, fresh and bright Barbera (aged in large oak casks) that shows good integrity of fruit and an easy, informal personality. Pair this wine with risotto cooked with cream of asparagus. Imported by Nicola Biscardo Selections. —M.L.

86 Cantine San Silvestro 2009 Ottone I (Barbera di Piemonte); \$10. This is a fruit-forward wine (aged only in stainless steel to maintain the freshness of the berry aromas) that would pair with cheesy pasta dishes. It's an easy, no-fuss Barbera with a refreshing note of acidity on the close. Imported by BelVino LLC. **Best Buy.** —M.L.

86 Carlin De Paolo 2009 Cursus Vitae (Barbera d'Asti); \$15. Aged only in stainless steel, this youthful Barbera d'Asti shows cheerful aromas of ripe fruit and sweet berries. The wine does a very nice job of balancing its naturally fresh acidity with the bright, pristine nature of its fruit. Imported by American Northwest Distributors Inc. —M.L.

86 Carlin De Paolo 2008 Cursus Vitae (Barbera d'Asti); \$15. Perfect for pairing with cheesy pizza, pasta topped with grated Pecorino cheese, or cold cuts of salami and ham, this fresh Barbera d'Asti cleans the palate with its fresh acidity and wild berry flavors. Imported by American Northwest Distributors Inc. —M.L.

86 Gianni Gagliardo 2008 Barbera d'Alba; \$19. Beautifully packaged in a simple bottle with a red seal, this fresh Barbera d'Alba (aged only in stainless steel) offers bright, sharp acidity that would cut straight through butter- or cream-based dishes. Imported by Enotec Imports, Inc. —M.L.

86 Massimiliano Vivalda 2008 Vivalda (Barbera d'Asti); \$13. Aged in stainless steel to maintain the integrity of its fresh fruit aromas, this bright wine presents layers of cherry, raspberry, spice cake and cola. It's a fresh, easy wine that would pair with sausage or pepperoni pizza. Imported by Testa Wines Of The World. —M.L.

OTHER RED WINES

92 Ceretto 2007 Monsordo (Langhe); \$38. Monsordo is an innovative concept and is a premier example of a modern, interna-

tional wine with unmistakable roots in Piedmont. Fruit used here includes Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Syrah and Nebbiolo and the overall effect is that of harmony and power. The wine is packed tight with red fruit, spice and tobacco and its texture is smooth, dense and rich. Very nice. Imported by Wilson Daniels Ltd. —M.L.

90 Anna Maria Abbona 2004 Cadò (Langhe); \$30. This beautiful blend of Barbera and Dolcetto shows characteristics of both native grapes (although the Barbera component is an overwhelming 90%). There are mature fruit aromas here with cherry, blackberry and raspberry but there's also a touch of spice cake and leather. From the 2004 vintage, the wine shows a soft and sophisticated side. Imported by Oliver McCrum Wines. —M.L.

88 Castello di Verduno 2008 Basadone (Verduno); \$28. Made with the little-known indigenous Pelaverga Piccolo grape, this ruby-colored red wine from Piedmont delivers a crisp, fresh and streamlined package that is distantly reminiscent of Nebbiolo. It's rustic but ripe with personality and if you are curious about new Italian varieties, give it a try. Imported by Oliver McCrum Wines. —M.L.

88 Montalbera 2008 Laccento (Ruché di Castagnole Monferrato); \$28. Laccento (from the Bricco Montalbera cru) is a luminous, ruby-colored wine with fresh aromas of raspberry, spice, cola, pressed violets and crushed black pepper. The wine is crisp and sharp with a good capacity to refresh the palate after cheesy or fatty foods. Imported by Bonhomie Wine Imports. —M.L.

87 Montalbera 2008 La Tradizione (Ruché di Castagnole Monferrato); \$22. Made with the little-known Ruché grape that is believed to be native of the Asti area of Italy's Piedmont region, this bright and ruby-colored red wine offers floral and simple berry aromas. It shows freshness and structure, making it a good pairing partner to pasta or quiche Lorraine. Imported by Bonhomie Wine Imports. —M.L.

87 Rizzi 2009 Dolcetto d'Alba; \$18. There's a very nice aromatic quality to this young Dolcetto d'Alba that can best be described as raspberry, blackberry and crushed black pepper. The spicy note gives the wine per-

sonality and staying power. Imported by Opici Import Company. —M.L.

87 Tenuta La Marchesa 2007 (Monferrato); \$19. This fun blend of Barbera, Merlot and Albarossa drinks easily and would pair with a long list of foods including pasta, chicken and spicy ground beef. Aromas include cherry, blackberry, cola and chocolate and the wine's finish is smooth and soft. Imported by Saranty Imports. —M.L.

85 Quattro Leoni 2008 Grignolino (Monferrato); \$17. The name Grignolino comes from the dialect word for "seeds." The grape, on the other hand, requires special winemaking techniques in order to soften the wine's tannins due to the natural abundance of seeds. Light in color and bright with fresh fruit characteristics, this would make an ideal red aperitivo wine. Imported by Marquee Artisan Wines. —M.L.

PIEDMONT WHITE WINES

ARNEIS

88 Giacomo Vico 2009 Arneis (Roero); \$18. Here is a very satisfying white wine from northern Italy that offers extreme freshness on the bouquet along with a creamy, silky structure at the end. Pair this Roero Arneis with seafood risotto or steamed mussels. Imported by The Wine Company. —M.L.

87 Ceretto 2008 Blangé Arneis (Langhe); \$27. Blangé is a supremely clean and pristine white wine to drink as an aperitivo or with fresh salads or seafood. There are bright fruit notes here of peach, pear and citrus but there's also a very attractive mineral tone that holds it all together. The wine is fresh, crisp and tonic throughout. Imported by Wilson Daniels Ltd. —M.L.

87 Pioiero 2008 Cascina Pioiero Arneis (Roero); \$23. Light, bright and luminous, this fresh and floral Roero Arneis is aged in stainless steel to maintain its natural zest and fruitiness. Pair the wine with shellfish or white meat. Imported by Enotec Imports, Inc. —M.L.

BUYING | GUIDE

86 Damilano 2008 Arneis (Langhe); \$21. Fresh, crisp and tonic, this light and luminous wine made from Piedmont's Arneis white variety boasts pretty aromas of citrus and white mineral. The wine is fun and easy to drink, especially with summery appetizers. Imported by Vias Imports. —M.L.

86 Damilano 2009 Arneis (Langhe); \$20. This luminous wine, presented in attractively clean packaging, opens with inviting aromas of citrus, peach and Golden Delicious. It's an informal, easy-drinking wine that washes down the palate in a very refreshing manner. Imported by Vias Imports. —M.L.

86 Donna Anita 2008 Arneis (Langhe); \$15. Donna Anita is a fresh Arneis from northern Italy that boasts a pretty mineral characteristic backed by light fruit touches of citrus and peach. Imported by Saranty Imports. —M.L.

CORTESE

87 La Scolca 2007 Black Label (Gavi); \$50. La Scolca's Black Label Gavi presents refined and elegant tones of peach, dried apricot, honey and white almond. The wine rests on the lees in order to absorb more complexity and texture. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd. —M.L.

87 Mauro Sebaste 2009 Cortese (Gavi); \$19. This is a luminous and clean white wine from northern Italy that offers fresh notes of citrus, green melon, kiwi and honey. The wine is sharp and focused in the mouth with an extremely pristine finish. Imported by Total Wine & More. —M.L.

87 Tenuta La Marchesa 2008 Cortese (Gavi); \$19. In beautiful Tenuta La Marchesa is a palace from the 1700s often used in film and for weddings, but it is especially known for its production of Gavi white wine. This light and luminous Cortese-based wine is indeed special with light, fragrant floral touches and a delicate personality overall. Imported by Saranty Imports. —M.L.

86 La Scolca 2007 White Label (Gavi); \$23. Here's a Cortese-based white wine that rests on the lees for extra texture and richness. The wine is redolent of peach, apricot,

honey and exotic fruit. It feels fresh and linear on the close. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd. —M.L.

86 Michele Chiarlo 2009 Le Marne Cortese (Gavi); \$19. This luminous Gavi offers mineral notes of graphite and talc powder backed by fruity tones of peach and citrus. The wine is smooth and silky on the close and would pair with seafood or tuna salad. Imported by Kobrand. —M.L.

86 Michele Chiarlo 2008 Le Marne Cortese (Gavi); \$19. A drying mineral tone backed by stone fruit and citrus gives this wine balance and a pristine quality in the mouth. It's light, compact and would make a perfect match to salty dishes or fried appetizers. Imported by Kobrand. —M.L.

86 Ricossa 2009 Cortese (Gavi); \$17. Here's a light and luminous Gavi that would make an excellent pairing partner to bruschetta or sliced ham on toasted bread. Crisp, tonic and fresh, the wine is loaded tight with citrus and stone fruit aromas. Imported by Touchstone Wines. —M.L.

86 Tenuta Olim Bauda 2009 Gavi di Gavi; \$20. There is a pristine mineral note that runs straight through the middle of this crisp Gavi di Gavi from northern Italy. The wine is easygoing and exceeding fresh with a sharp, crisp close and light consistency. Imported by US Wine Imports. —M.L.

84 Vinchio-Vaglio Serra 2008 Cantina Tre Serre Cortese (Piedmont); \$11. Here's an easy white wine with crisp citrus and mineral tones backed by a clean, pristine feel. The wine doesn't offer much heft or thickness, and for this reason it is best paired with light foods or salads. Imported by Bon Vivant Imports. —M.L.

OTHER WHITE WINES

86 Orlando Abrigo 2009 Très Chardonnay (Langhe); \$NA. This luminous Chardonnay from the Langhe area of northern Italy is a focused and precise wine that delivers loads of mineral intensity. You'll get talc powder and white stone backed by peach and citrus. It's crisp and tonic with informal,

food-friendly appeal. Imported by Ionia Atlantic. —M.L.

85 Giacomo Vico 2009 Favorita (Langhe); \$12. Aged only in stainless steel, this fresh white wine (made with the local Favorita grape) offers crisp layers of citrus, stone fruit and white mineral. The wine is lean and compact but tastes refreshing nonetheless. Imported by Total Wine & More. —M.L.

85 Orlando Abrigo 2009 D'Amblè Sauvignon (Langhe); \$NA. Here's a crisp, mineral-driven Sauvignon from northern Italy with background aromas of peach, honeydew melon and white peach. The wine shows medium consistency and good staying power with a dry, crisp finish. Imported by Ionia Atlantic. —M.L.

PIEDMONT SPARKLING WINES

MOSCATO

89 Contratto 2006 De Miranda (Moscato d'Asti); \$90. This is not your standard Moscato d'Asti. This sophisticated expression benefits from high density planting in the vineyard and the fruit is fermented in special French barrique for extra creaminess. On the nose, this sparkling dessert wine is redolent of apricot, pineapple and honey. Imported by Bedford International. —M.L.

87 Ceretto 2009 I Vignaioli di Santo Stefano (Moscato d'Asti); \$24. Moscato d'Asti is such a wonderfully delicious wine and this expression from the folks at Ceretto offers sweet aromas of honey, peach blossom, white flower and acacia. The soft foaming feels lush and creamy in the mouth and those sweet honey flavors leave a lasting impression. Imported by Wilson Daniels Ltd. —M.L.

86 Tenute Cisa Asinari dei Marchesi di Gresy 2009 La Serra (Moscato d'Asti); \$16. Always a favorite in the world of Moscato d'Asti, this light and luminous dessert wine offers especially clean aromas of honey, melon, peach and white flower. The bubbles offer

a firm, refreshing and spicy feel to the mouth. Imported by Dalla Terra Winery Direct. —M.L.

85 Tenuta Olim Bauda 2009 Centive (Moscato d'Asti); \$17. Freshness and deep floral fragrances emerge from the foamy and creamy nose of this well-made Moscato d'Asti. It delivers a soft, plush feel in the mouth and would pair with dried biscuits or sponge cake. Imported by US Wine Imports. —M.L.

85 Vinchio-Vaglio Serra 2008 Valamasca (Moscato d'Asti); \$14. Valamasca is a bright and foamy Moscato d'Asti with cheerful aromas of white flower, honey, peach and dried hay. The creamy effervescence feels thick and smooth in the mouth and the wine would pair with baked desserts or fruit. Imported by Ionia Atlantic. —M.L.

84 Vino dei Fratelli 2008 Moscato d'Asti; \$15. Soapy, foaming and very fragrant on the nose, this luminous Moscato d'Asti delivers aromas of wild flower, dried herbs and even a touch of dill. Luscious sweet nuances wash clean over the palate. Imported by Quintessential Wines. —M.L.

BRACHETTO

86 Giacomo Vico 2008 Birbet Brachetto (Piedmont); \$17. Here's a ruby-colored sparkling dessert wine that would pair with chocolate-covered strawberries, panna cotta or apricot tart. Fruity and cheerful, aromas here include raspberry, white cherry and cranberry. Creamy foaming is capped by bright crispness to keep the mouth refreshed. Imported by Adventures In Wine. —M.L.

84 Vinchio-Vaglio Serra 2008 Nivasco Brachetto (Piedmont); \$15. Here's a ruby red sparkler that should be served with desserts, especially creamy ones such as panna cotta with forest berries or creamy fruit pie. Aromas include raspberry and blueberry and the wine is simple and fresh on the close. Imported by Ionia Atlantic. —M.L.

AUSTRIA RED WINES

BLAUFRÄNKISCH

93 Kollwentz 2007 Point Blaufränkisch (Burgenland); \$NA. Rich red fruits, wood spice and austere tannins have produced a wine that is intense and powerful. Layers of freshness and acidity moderate this dark concentration. Age for at least five years. Imported by Vos Selections. *Cellar Selection.* —R.V.

92 Judith Beck 2007 Altenberg Blaufränkisch (Burgenland); \$60. Firm and structured, packed with ripe berry fruits, a touch of pepper and firm, solid tannins. The delicious fruit is sustained by acidity, and a dry, elegant structure. Imported by Adventures In Wine. —R.V.

89 Kollwentz 2008 Leithagebirge Blaufränkisch (Burgenland); \$36. Wood-dominated wine, at this stage suppressing the concentrated fruit, rich black berries and elegant tannins. The wine needs at least four years. Imported by Vos Selections. —R.V.

88 Judith Beck 2008 Blaufränkisch (Burgenland); \$20. Smooth, just lightly peppery, with bitter cherry and sweet tannins. This is delicious, pure juicy wine, finished with tight acidity. Imported by Adventures In Wine. —R.V.

PINOT NOIR

90 Kollwentz 2007 Dürr Pinot Noir (Burgenland); \$NA. A 900-foot vineyard offers just the right cool conditions for great Pinot Noir. This is impressive, toast and raspberry fruit flavors vying with spice and acidity. It needs 3–4 years for the wood to integrate completely. Imported by Vos Selections. *Cellar Selection.* —R.V.

89 Judith Beck 2007 Pinot Noir (Burgenland); \$50. Lovely red berry fruits, with great acidity and fine perfumes. The elegance of the wine is spoiled slightly by a rustic edge, although the red berry aftertaste is fresh and clean. Imported by Adventures In Wine. —R.V.

89 Zull 2006 Pinot Noir (Niederösterreich); \$36. Very true to the variety, with red cherry flavors, and soft tannins. The wine is ripe, juicy, very perfumed, all finished with great acidity. Imported by Magellan Wine Imports. —R.V.

ZWEIFELT

88 Judith Beck 2009 Zweigelt (Burgenland); \$20. A tasty, juicy wine with ripe red cherry fruit and lively acidity. Soft, beautifully ripe, ready to drink. Imported by Adventures In Wine. —R.V.

88 Zull 2009 Zweigelt (Niederösterreich); \$17. Bitter cherry and sweet ripe fruit in this rounded, barrel-aged wine. Gentle tannins underline the fruitiness and the broad brush texture. Imported by Magellan Wine Imports. —R.V.

87 Kollwentz 2009 Föllikberg Zweigelt (Burgenland); \$30. Red berry aromas follow through to an attractive, simple, juicy wine, a core of tannins surrounded by chunky, rustic fruits. Imported by Vos Selections. —R.V.

OTHER RED WINES

93 Judith Beck 2007 Judith (Burgenland); \$60. Judith Beck's namesake wine is rich, opulent, piled high with ripe fruit and sweet, structured tannins. The wine has floral notes, chocolate and great complexity. For aging over 4–5 years. Imported by Adventures In Wine. *Cellar Selection.* —R.V.

92 Judith Beck 2007 Pannobile (Burgenland); \$60. A classic Austrian blend of Zweigelt, Blaufränkisch and St Laurent, this is big, bold and ripe, structured, powerful and dense. Pure juicy black berry fruits drive right through the tight tannins. Age for 3–4 years. Imported by Adventures In Wine. —R.V.

90 Judith Beck 2008 Heideboden (Burgenland); \$28. From young vines, this is a big, berried wine, dense and concentrated. Sweet cherries, juicy texture and light tannins give a tasty, ripe wine. Imported by Adventures In Wine. —R.V.

BUYING GUIDE

90 Judith Beck 2007 Schafleiten St. Laurent (Burgenland); \$37. From well-drained gravel soil, this is a structured wine, flavored with red plums, red berries and firm tannins. St Laurent is an underestimated grape, and this wine shows its wonderful, juicy potential. Imported by Adventures In Wine. —R.V.

90 Kollwentz 2007 Eichkogel (Burgenland); \$55. A beautiful, smooth, rich, intense wine, the structure clothed in great ripe layers of fruit. Touches of paprika balance with lively acidity and fresh berry flavors. Imported by Vos Selections. —R.V.

85 Zull 2009 Lust & Laune Red (Niederösterreich); \$14. Light Beaujolais in style, very fruity, packed with red cherry and juicy spice. It is bright, vivid to taste. Try serving just chilled. Imported by Magellan Wine Imports. —R.V.

ROSÉ WINES

86 Zull 2009 Lust & Laune Rosé (Niederösterreich); \$14. Touched by caramel, this is a bone-dry rosé, very crisp and fruity, with raspberry, red cherry. Imported by Magellan Wine Imports. —R.V.

84 Gritsch Mauritiushof 2009 Kalmuck Pink Zweigelt (Niederösterreich); \$17. Fresh, strawberry-flavored wine—a bright, crisp, dry rosé, finishing with light acidity. Imported by Winemonger. —R.V.

AUSTRIA WHITE WINES

GRÜNER VELTLINER

93 Markus Huber 2009 Berg Grüner Veltliner Reserve (Traisental); \$NA. A firm and closed wine, packed with quince, pear, spice held in a mineral structure. It is potentially rich, but is still closed, needing several months to broaden out in all its richness. Imported by Circo Vino. —R.V.

92 Gritsch Mauritiushof 2009 Singerriedel Grüner Veltliner Smaragd (Wachau); \$40. A very focused wine with a core of strong structure along with apple, tight

acidity and citrus. This is powerful, intense, with impressive aging potential. Imported by Winemonger. *Cellar Selection.* —R.V.

91 Gritsch Mauritiushof 2009 Steinporz Grüner Veltliner Smaragd (Wachau); \$42. Initially smooth and rich, this slowly reveals a taut mineral character that acts as a powerful structure. Yellow fruits and mangos are woven into this texture, leaving the final acidity to suggest aging potential. Imported by Winemonger. —R.V.

91 Markus Huber 2009 Alte Setzen Grüner Veltliner Reserve (Traisental); \$NA. Smooth and rich, with ripe, spiced peach as well as a mineral edge. The acidity tightens the generous texture of this powerful wine, leaving the concentration deliciously fresh. Imported by Circo Vino. —R.V.

91 Norbert Bauer 2009 Haidberg Grüner Veltliner (Niederösterreich); \$NA. A wood-aged Grüner, with a definite toast and caramel element, concentrated ripe plums and greengage. The aftertaste reveals fresher fruit and acidity. Imported by Epicur Wines. —R.V.

91 Zull 2009 Aussere Bergen Grüner Veltliner (Niederösterreich); \$24. Planted with cuttings from many Austrian wine regions, the Aussere Bergen vineyard produces a ripe, full wine, packed with yellow fruits, spice and a feeling of opulence, while always balanced. Imported by Magellan Wine Imports. —R.V.

90 Norbert Bauer 2009 Kellerberg Grüner Veltliner (Weinviertel); \$NA. From cool vineyards, this is an impressive, steely, crisp wine, mineral in texture, with tight fruit, fresh but always in tension. Imported by Epicur Wines. —R.V.

89 Gritsch Mauritiushof 2009 Singerriedel Grüner Veltliner Federspiel (Wachau); \$27. Very mineral in character, this tastes of the stones of the steep Singerriedel vineyard. The wine shows tight texture—acidity along with green fruit flavors. The aftertaste brings out citrus freshness. Imported by Winemonger. —R.V.

89 Josef Ehmoser 2009 Hohenberg Grüner Veltliner (Wagram-Donauland); \$21. A beautifully rich wine,

packed with pear juice and light acidity. The soft texture balances well with ripe green plum flavors and a final creamy character. Imported by Magellan Wine Imports. —R.V.

88 Gritsch Mauritiushof 2009 Axpoint Grüner Veltliner Federspiel (Wachau); \$20. In a ripe style, this is soft, with creamed apple and pear flavors, smooth and light. There is a touch of attractive spice to go with the final acidity. Imported by Winemonger. —R.V.

88 Zull 2009 Grüner Veltliner (Weinviertel); \$17. A powerful, full and ripe style that still manages to preserve bright apple and green herb flavors. Crisp fruit and mineral combine harmoniously. Imported by Magellan Wine Imports. —R.V.

87 Josef Ehmoser 2009 Von den Terrassen Grüner Veltliner (Wagram-Donauland); \$14. Soft and fresh style of wine that feels full without losing its light touch. Delicious baked apple and nutmeg flavors finish this bright wine. Imported by Magellan Wine Imports. —R.V.

87 Norbert Bauer 2009 Altenberg Grüner Veltliner (Niederösterreich); \$15. Very fresh, crisp fruit, light and with a soft, green plum skin texture. The aftertaste is lively, bright. Imported by Epicur Wines. —R.V.

86 Gritsch Mauritiushof 2009 Kalmuck Grüner Veltliner Federspiel (Wachau); \$20. Attractive fresh fruit, crisp apples and vivid acidity make a great citrus wine, perfect as an apéritif. Imported by Winemonger. —R.V.

86 Zull 2009 Lust & Laune Grüner Veltliner (Niederösterreich); \$14. Fresh and light, with acidity, citrus and grapefruit flavors plus a touch of pear. Imported by Magellan Wine Imports. —R.V.

RIESLING

93 Markus Huber 2009 Berg Riesling Reserve (Traisental); \$NA. A beautiful wine that sings out with its delicious fruits and tight, mineral structure. It has a purity of line, citrus and apple flavors vying with spice. The

wine finishes with high, vibrant acidity. Imported by Circo Vino. —R.V.

92 Gritsch Mauritiushof 2009 1000 Eimerberg Riesling Smaragd (Wachau); \$40. Apricot aromas are followed by ripe fruit flavors, giving a rich texture, yet retaining a very clean, fresh character. Opulence with steel. Imported by Winemonger. —R.V.

92 Markus Huber 2009 Engelreich Riesling (Traisental); \$NA. Steely. Cool fruit joins an immense series of flavors—crisp citrus, lime zest, pink grapefruit in the tightest texture. For aging over 3–4 years, probably longer. Imported by Circo Vino. **Cellar Selection.** —R.V.

91 Zull 2009 Innere Bergen Riesling (Niederösterreich); \$22. Beautifully light, a steely core wrapped in apricot, citrus and the brightest, perfumed acidity. A delicious wine, packed with fresh, pure fruit character. Imported by Magellan Wine Imports. —R.V.

90 Josef Ehmoser 2009 Vom Gelben Löss Riesling (Wagram-Donauland); \$21. This is a full-bodied wine with a citrus streak of acidity to go with peach and apricot flavors. It is rich, just hinting at minerality, generous in mouthfeel. Imported by Magellan Wine Imports. —R.V.

88 Norbert Bauer 2009 Diermannsee Riesling (Niederösterreich); \$18. A crisp style of Riesling, with freshly perfumed green fruits and a steely edge. Flavors of white currants and green plums finish with vivid acidity. Imported by Epicur Wines. —R.V.

87 Gritsch Mauritiushof 2009 1000 Eimerberg Riesling Federspiel (Wachau); \$29. Dry, classic perfumed fruit, bright and crisp. The wine is touched with a steely edge, very mineral with delicious citrus and green apple to finish. Imported by Winemonger. —R.V.

CHARDONNAY

94 Kollwentz 2008 Gloria Chardonnay (Burgenland); \$80. Tight, mineral, taut wine, showing citrus, lime zest and pear skin flavors. Stone fruits emerge in an elegant texture. This is structured, powerful, offering serious aging potential. Imported by Vos Selections. —R.V.

92 Kollwentz 2008 Tatschler Chardonnay (Burgenland); \$NA. From slate and limestone vineyards, this is an intense wine, full of tropical fruit flavors, spice, toast and hints of ginger. The wine rolls richly around the mouth, a gorgeous, opulent texture. Imported by Vos Selections. —R.V.

92 Zull 2006 Riesling Beerenauslese (Niederösterreich); \$40/375 ml. Very rich in texture while also balanced, this is a wine that shows extreme concentration—honey, yellow fruits and final sugar all wrapped in lively acidity. Imported by Magellan Wine Imports. —R.V.

92 Zull 2008 Riesling Eiswein (Niederösterreich); \$40/375 ml. Intense acidity, with the sweetness held in check by a bright, crisp character. Rich honey is balanced by an exquisite freshness, lightly perfumed, so clean and clear in final taste. Imported by Magellan Wine Imports. —R.V.

91 Kollwentz 2009 Leithagebirge Chardonnay (Burgenland); \$30. Rich and creamy, yellow fruit ripeness over lime zest acidity. This is powerful wine, although not heavy, its acidity bursting out through the complex flavors. Imported by Vos Selections. —R.V.

89 Judith Beck 2008 Pannobile Weiss Chardonnay (Burgenland); \$NA. Certainly ripe, but with such elegant fruit—quince, peach, mango, laced with grapefruit freshness. The light touches of toast come from barrel fermentation. —R.V.

SAUVIGNON BLANC

93 Neumeister 2008 Moarfeitl Sauvignon Blanc (Südoststeiermark); \$48. Christoph Neumeister's top wine, this is a classic among Sauvignon Blancs. It is tightly structured, very herbal, with greengage and gooseberry flavors over asparagus and spice. It can age well, needing 3–4 years to reach its peak. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd. **Cellar Selection.** —R.V.

92 Neumeister 2009 Klausen Sauvignon Blanc (Südoststeiermark); \$NA. From a steep vineyard above the village of Straden, this has wonderful tropical fruit aromas, the fruit beautifully ripe. Ripe, smooth, rounded,

the acidity giving just the right final burst of herbal freshness. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd. **Editors' Choice.** —R.V.

90 Neumeister 2009 Sauvignon Blanc Klassik (Südoststeiermark); \$26. Fresh and creamy wine, green herbs over apricots and pears. The wine is textured, with a good mineral, sea salt character, the fruit giving a rich final mouthfeel. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd. —R.V.

89 Kollwentz 2009 Steinmühle Sauvignon Blanc (Burgenland); \$50. On the tropical side of Sauvignon Blanc, this is packed with mango and apricot flavors, direct and fruity. There is just a final touch of green herbs. Imported by Vos Selections. —R.V.

OTHER DRY WHITES

91 Neumeister 2008 Steintal Roter Traminer (Südoststeiermark); \$NA. Perfumed and restrained, with aromas of rose oil. The wine is balanced, elegant, restrained, acidity pairing with flavors of star fruit, peach and just a touch of spicy sweetness. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd. —R.V.

90 Norbert Bauer 2009 Alter Weingarten Mischsatz (Niederösterreich); \$NA. This vineyard was planted with a whole range of varieties, with a predominance of Pinot Blanc. The result is a smooth, creamy, ripe, plum-textured wine, pierced by grapefruit. It is full bodied, complex. Imported by Epicur Wines. **Editors' Choice.** —R.V.

90 Neumeister 2009 Grauburgunder Klassik (Südoststeiermark); \$23. Grauburgunder (Pinot Gris) has become popular in Styria because of its ability to ripen easily. The wine has a touch of spice to go with a complex blend of ripe peach, white berries and final intense, almost cool acidity. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd. —R.V.

89 Josef Ehmoser 2009 Weissburgunder (Wagram-Donauland); \$19. With a 10% barrel fermentation, this is a smooth Pinot Blanc. It has a luscious creamy texture, with pear, quince and green plum flavors. The ripe richness is well balanced with a fine layer of acidity. Imported by Magellan Wine Imports. —R.V.

88 Neumeister 2009 Gelber Muskateller Klassik (Südoststeiermark); \$23. Fresh wine, touched by late harvest richness. Apples, spice and orange zest make for a vividly aromatic series of delicious flavors. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd. —R.V.

SWEET WINES

93 Kollwentz 2006 Chardonnay Trockenbeerenauslese (Burgenland); \$NA/375 ml. Brilliant wine, honey and intense acidity over the crispest lemon and spice flavors. From Chardonnay grown in the Tatschler vineyard, this is lively, fresh and sumptuous all at the same time. Imported by Vos Selections. —R.V.

92 Norbert Bauer 2008 Grüner Veltliner Eiswein (Niederösterreich); \$35/375 ml. Both crisp and rich, a magical combination with beautiful acidity, light currants, the whole wine infused with honey. The final acidity leaves a long-lasting aftertaste. Imported by Epicur Wines. —R.V.

91 Josef Ehmoser 2009 Grüner Veltliner Eiswein (Wagram-Donauland); \$34/375 ml. Harvested on December 15, this rich and sweet wine is light on acidity but heavy on concentrated apricot jam and honey flavors. It is opulent, intense, with a bright ginger spice aftertaste. Imported by Magellan Wine Imports. —R.V.

BULGARIA

RED WINES

86 Vini 2008 Veni Vidi Vici Cabernet Sauvignon (Thracian Valley); \$8. Herbaceous notes of dill and green wood converge with ripe, sweet plum and spice aromas on this medium-bodied, bargain Bulgarian Cabernet Sauvignon. Although initially soft with notes of sweet blackberry, it gains earthiness in the mid-palate. Firm tannins offer structure, but the vanilla finish drops a bit abruptly. Imported by Bulgarian Master Vintners. **Best Buy.** —A.I.

83 Vini 2008 Veni Vidi Vici Merlot (Thracian Valley); \$8. Although pleasant aromatically with notes of toasted oak, dark

cherries and black pepper spice, the dark cherry flavors of this Bulgarian Merlot are overpowered by gripping wood and grape tannins and an aggressive, sour acidity. Overall, it's choppy and disjointed, but the earthy, fruity finish isn't bad. Imported by Bulgarian Master Vintners. —A.I.

WHITE WINES

85 Targovishte 2009 Riesling (Bulgaria); \$9. Aromatically, this Bulgarian Riesling is quite pretty with loads of freshly pressed apples, elderflowers and Meyer lemon scents. Light bodied and dry with a racy acidity, its palate is austere but has some muted floral and honeydew flavors. Imported by Bulgarian Master Vintners. **Best Buy.** —A.I.

84 Vini 2009 Veni Vidi Vici Sauvignon Blanc (Thracian Valley); \$8. The nose on this Bulgarian Sauvignon Blanc opens with white flowers and honey, but devolves rapidly to scents of musk and feline spray. Dry, with brisk acidity, there's some refreshing lemon zest and melon rind flavors on the palate. The viscosity of this medium-bodied wine is pleasant, but the finish ends on a dusty note. Imported by Bulgarian Master Vintners. **Best Buy.** —A.I.

82 Targovishte 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Bulgaria); \$9. Though pleasant aromatically with lots of freshly cut grass and gooseberry notes, this full-bodied, dry Bulgarian Sauvignon Blanc has a dense, clunky mouthfeel and a bracingly high acidity. There's some decent lemon and grapefruit flavors, but plenty of tinned green asparagus as well. Imported by Bulgarian Master Vintners. —A.I.

81 Targovishte 2009 Chardonnay (Bulgaria); \$9. The nose on this Bulgarian Chardonnay might be promising with scents of dill, coconut, fresh apples and herbs. The palate, however, is jagged and disjointed with enamel-eroding acidity combined with flavors of vanilla, leafy stalks and sour green plums. The finish drops suddenly and ends on a smoky, dusty note. Imported by Bulgarian Master Vintners. —A.I.

GEORGIA

82 Telavi 2008 Marani Saperavi Rosé (Kakheti); \$10. Salmon pink with a tinge of copper, this Georgian rosé made from

the Saperavi grape wafts of syrupy strawberry jam and tinned tomato juice. There's some berry notes, but overall, flavors of tomato and dried herbs dominate the palate. Imported by Corus LLC. —A.I.

LEBANON

RED WINE

87 Château Musar 2008 Jeune Red (Bekaa Valley); \$20. The Jeune Red from Château Musar's second line (formerly labeled Musar Cuvée Rouge) is a blend of Cinsault, Syrah and Cabernet Sauvignon that smells sweetly of ripe black cherries with rustic herbal and earthy notes. It opens softly with sweet blackberries and a hint of green bramble, but is chased by a mid-palate of fairly aggressive tannins and acidity. Fermented and aged in concrete vats, the Musar Jeune is completely unoaked and intended for early consumption, but would probably do nicely with some bottle aging as well. Imported by Broadbent Selections, Inc. —A.I.

ROSÉ WINE

82 Heritage 2008 Rosé d'Une Nuit (Bekaa Valley); \$15. A blend of Cinsault, Grenache and Syrah, this salmon-colored rosé from Lebanon is dominated both on the nose and palate by a green, herbaceous oak character. It's a dry, medium-bodied wine with faint and dusty strawberry and raspberry flavors in the backdrop, but overall, a disjointed, clumsy sip. Imported by Vidalco International, LLC. —A.I.

WHITE WINES

87 Château Musar 2008 Cuvée Blanc (Bekaa Valley); \$20. Unoaked and intended for earlier consumption, the Musar Cuvée Blanc is the uncomplicated, easy-to-drink younger sibling of the idiosyncratic Lebanese winery's more austere Château line. A blend of Chardonnay, Viognier and Vermentino, the wine has aromas of bruised apples on the nose, but plenty of fresh apple and pear on the palate with bright acidity and a stony, mineral profile. It's a balanced wine with pleasant astringency on the palate and an herbaceous character throughout. Imported by Broadbent Selections, Inc. —A.I.

86 Heritage 2008 Blanc de Blancs (Bekaa Valley); \$15. Bright and lemony on the nose with freshly cut grass and a hint of melon rind, this dry white wine is a blend of Chardonnay, Ugni Blanc and Muscat. It's not very complex, but fresh apples and pear flavors and a nice, luscious mouthfeel makes this Lebanese wine a quaffable choice. Imported by Vidalco International, LLC. —A.I.

81 Le Fleuron NV White (Bekaa Valley); \$12. This dry, medium-bodied blend of Ugni Blanc and Clairette from Lebanon is grassy and feline on the nose with lots of tinned asparagus and pea flavors on the palate. Apple and pear notes linger in the background, but overall, the vegetal nature of this wine dominates. Imported by Vidalco International, LLC. —A.I.

ROMANIA

RED WINES

87 Byzantium 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Dealu Mare); \$10. At just \$10, Byzantium's Cabernet Sauvignon offers great bang for the buck. Pleasant aromas of ripe, red plums, espresso and toasted oak complement the lush black cherries and earth notes on the palate. Balanced acidity and firm but pleasant tannins extend through the coffee and black cherry finish. Imported by Danex International. **Best Buy.** —A.I.

87 Prahova Valley 2008 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon (Dealurile Munteniei); \$10. Elegant and feminine on the nose with lovely cassis, toasted oak and violet notes, this medium-bodied Cab is another excellent bargain from Romania's Prahova Valley. Sturdy tannins and a pleasant astringency add structure to the luscious, ripe red fruits on the palate. It's high in acid, but well balanced, ending in a puckery, sour cherry finish. Imported by Terra Firma USA Inc. **Best Buy.** —A.I.

87 Prahova Valley 2008 Reserve Pinot Noir (Dealu Mare); \$10. This bargain Pinot Noir is a pleasant surprise from Romania's Prahova Valley with pretty aromas of black cherries, bark and menthol. Concentrated plum and cherry flavors are countered by darker notes of coffee grinds, earth and bramble. Medium bodied with balanced tannins and acidity, it's a straightforward, everyday kind of wine,

but a promising start for Romania's wine industry. Imported by Terra Firma USA Inc. **Best Buy.** —A.I.

86 Terra Romana 2007 Cuvée Charlotte (Dealu Mare); \$18. The nose on this Romanian blend of Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon and Feteasca Neagra is dark and smoky with charred oak, coffee and tobacco melding into an herbaceous, woody backdrop. Juicy black plums and cherries are offset by strong grape and wood tannins and notes of cigar smoke and black pepper on the palate. It's fine now, but a year or two in the cellar might smooth out some jagged edges. Imported by Terra Firma USA Inc. —A.I.

86 Werewolf 2008 Pinot Noir (Romania); \$9. While there's lots of candied black cherry and coffee grinds on the nose, on the palate, this medium-bodied Romanian Pinot Noir is rustic and herbaceous with balanced sour cherry fruit and notes of grass and earth. With such mild tannins, it lacks impact on the mid-palate, but bright acidity carries it through a fairly long finish. Imported by Tri-Vin Imports. **Best Buy.** —A.I.

85 Byzantium 2007 Rosso di Valachia (Dealu Mare); \$10. Although the nose on this medium-bodied Romanian blend of Pinot Noir, Merlot and Feteasca Neagra is pretty with ripe, black plums, vanilla and a hint of cashew nuts, it takes some airing out for the charred oak flavors to settle, allowing red plum and coffee grind notes to appear on the palate. Gripping tannins and high acidity give this wine a puckery astringency, but it's not bad for the bargain price. Imported by Danex International. **Best Buy.** —A.I.

85 Prahova Valley 2008 Reserve Merlot (Dealurile Munteniei); \$10. This medium-bodied Romanian Merlot is herbaceous and woody on the nose with notes of vanilla, toasted oak and black cherries. The fleshy red plum flavors compete awkwardly with a green, stalky profile and strong tannins, but finishes on a pleasant sour cherry note. Imported by Terra Firma USA Inc. **Best Buy.** —A.I.

84 Chevalier de Dyonis 2008 Pinot Noir (Dealu Mare); \$8. The prominent barnyard scent in this bargain bin Pinot Noir takes a while to blow off after pouring, but is gradually replaced by aromas of black cherries,

leather and wet, autumn leaves. There's subdued black fruit on the palate, but plenty of earthy, stalky and vegetal notes as well. Low in tannins and body, the finish ends on a rather sour note. Imported by Terra Firma USA Inc. **Best Buy.** —A.I.

83 Dreamer 2007 Selected Harvest Pinot Noir (Dealurile Munteniei); \$10. Dense and syrupy like black cherry juice, this semisweet Romanian Pinot Noir is not a wine with much finesse, but if you're looking for a sugary red wine low in tannins and acidity, this is right up your alley. Imported by Terra Firma USA Inc. —A.I.

ROSÉ WINE

82 Dreamer 2009 Late Harvest Merlot Rosé (Dealurile Munteniei); \$9. Rose pink with a perfumed, confectioned aroma of strawberry jam and Love's Baby Soft perfume, this semisweet late harvest Merlot rosé from Romania is sugary and syrupy. Imported by Terra Firma USA Inc. —A.I.

WHITE WINES

86 Verus Vineyards 2009 Riesling (Štajerska); \$20. This Riesling from Slovenia is a bit perfumed on the nose with an abundance of white blossoms, baby powder and pink grapefruit aromas, but there's a pleasant, citrusy sweetness and acidity throughout. Medium bodied, it finishes quite dry with a gentle white tea astringency. Imported by Tasty Wine Company. —A.I.

86 Verus Vineyards 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Štajerska); \$20. Fragrant of freshly cut grass, honeydew melon and orange blossoms, this dry, medium-bodied Sauvignon Blanc from Slovenia has pleasant grapefruit and lemon flavors and a racy, zippy acidity that tingles on the tongue. It's a simple but refreshing wine with a lime zest and smoke finish. Imported by Tasty Wine Company. —A.I.

84 Terra Romana 2009 Chardonnay (Dealu Mare); \$10. Warm, toasty aromas with notes of coconut and dill, along with some honey and applesauce are pleasant on this dry Chardonnay from Romania. Unfortunately, the raw, aggressive acidity makes this wine lack

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balance and harmony, interfering with flavors of fresh apples, lemon and cream. Imported by Terra Firma USA Inc. —A.I.

83 Prahova Valley 2008 Reserve Chardonnay (Sebes); \$10. There are pleasant scents of vanilla, spice and poached pears on this Romanian Chardonnay, but the palate suffers from bracingly high acidity and faint apple flavors lacking depth and concentration. The finish is short and ends on notes of sawdust. Imported by Terra Firma USA Inc. —A.I.

83 Sole 2009 Chardonnay (Recas); \$15. Green and herbaceous on the nose, this full-bodied, dry Chardonnay from Romania suffers from bracingly high acidity levels, but has pleasant flavors of lemon, stones and a hint of almonds. The finish is short and drops suddenly on a sour, green note. Imported by Terra Firma USA Inc. —A.I.

82 Dreamer 2008 Late Harvest Riesling (Dealurile Munteniei); \$9. There's a vegetal, tinned nature to this late harvest Riesling from Romania that dominates both the nose and the palate. Honeyed apple and pear flavors peek through the off-dry palate, but overall, it's a disjointed, tired wine with bracingly high acidity. Imported by Terra Firma USA Inc. —A.I.

CALIFORNIA RED WINES

CABERNETS & BLENDS

96 Long Meadow Ranch 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Rutherford); \$42. An extraordinary Cabernet that stands out even in this great vintage, and among its Rutherford peers. Quite dry and tannic in youth, it shows an astringency that strongly suggests the cellar. Underneath are powerhouse flavors of blackberries, black and red cherries, spices, tea and cedar. Really defines balance and elegance in a Napa Cabernet. Decant if you drink it now, but it should develop for years to come. *Editors' Choice.* —S.H.

96 Staglin 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Rutherford); \$175. A big wine, rather ponderous now in the size and forwardness of its fruit and the volume of mainly new French oak. The fruit is massive, suggesting black and red sour

cherry candy, with oak influences of smoky char and pencil shavings, and complex notes of minerals and sweet violet flowers. But it all needs time to come together. Tasted in a large flight of 2007 Rutherford Cabernets and Bordeaux blends, this was easily the star. Really hard to exaggerate the wine's beauty and elegance. Best 2013–2019, at least. *Cellar Selection.* —S.H.

95 Chateau St. Jean 2005 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon (Sonoma County); \$90. Texture is the name of the game here. We're talking pure velvet, the way the wine glides over the palate with hardly a wrinkle. Beyond the mouthfeel are flavors so complex, they're hard to describe. The blend consists of Cabernet Sauvignon, with contributions from Cab Franc, Malbec and Petit Verdot, and each grape brings its own distinction, as does 100% new oak. It's approachable now for the softness, and should glide through the next 6–8 years with ease. Expensive, yes, and only 344 cases were produced, but it's worth the search. *Editors' Choice.* —S.H.

94 Alpha Omega 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$82. There's a tannic toughness to this young wine. It's like chewing on dried black currants. Once they start to dissolve in the mouth, lovely flavors of sweet blackberries emerge, and then take over through a very long, spicy finish. It's quite a beautiful Napa Cabernet, but it does need time. Best 2013–2019. *Cellar Selection.* —S.H.

94 Cakebread 2006 Dancing Bear Ranch Cabernet Sauvignon (Howell Mountain); \$105. This is a very rich wine. Complex, too. With every sip, it seems to offer a little more of itself. On the surface, it's dry, tannic and fruity, with blackberry, black currant, dark chocolate and cedar flavors. But it has mineral and herb nuances that seem to spring from the soil, and the depth and finish are impressive. Drinkable now for sheer luxury, and should continue to develop over the next decade. —S.H.

94 Chimney Rock 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Stags Leap District); \$61. This is Chimney Rock's best Stags Leap Cabernet since the 2005, and continues a string of successful vintages. Dry and smooth and silky in the mouth, it's pretty tannic, but very rich, offering waves of cherry, blackberry, blueberry, cocoa and sweet cedar flavors. Absolutely deli-

cious, wonderfully elegant, and should age well for a decade. —S.H.

94 Honig 2007 Campbell Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Rutherford); \$75. This 100% Cabernet's dark, saturated color testifies to its extracted ripeness and richness. It's a gigantic wine, buried at the moment under smoky oak, but tremendous underneath in blackberry, cherry, currant, sweet herb, violet and cured meat flavors. A big success even in this vintage. Now, with decanting, and through 2019. —S.H.

94 Justin 2007 Isosceles Reserve (Paso Robles); \$95. A tremendous wine that easily held its own against Napa Cabs and blends, and a worthy followup to the wonderful 2006. Mainly Cabernet Sauvignon, with small amounts of Cabernet Franc and Merlot, the wine is extraordinarily rich and balanced and refined, showing Paso softness, but no absence of complexity. Really impresses for the depth and range of berries, currants, licorice, mocha, herbs, spices and oak. Now–2015. —S.H.

94 Meander 2007 Morisoli Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Rutherford); \$120. Such are the tannins in this 100% Cab that it demands cellar time. It's really shut down and astringent in youth, which emphasizes the dryness. But it's very fine, with a solid core of ripe black cherry fruit that will express its sweetness when the tannins melt away. Winemaker Amy Aiken is really showing her stuff with this polished ager. Best 2013–2019. *Cellar Selection.* —S.H.

94 Peju 2007 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon (Rutherford); \$105. Erupts out from the glass with beautiful Cabernet perfume, suggesting cherry pie from the oven, licorice, sandalwood and dusty dried herbs, like sage and thyme. Very dry, with a long spicy finish, but also quite tannic, although lots of the tannins come from new oak. Best to age this polished 100% Cab for at least six years. —S.H.

93 Alpha Omega 2007 Proprietary Red Wine (Napa Valley); \$86. There's something very fine and compelling about this Merlot-based Bordeaux blend. It's powerful in oak-inspired blackberry, black cherry and black currant flavors, but even more noteworthy is the quality of the tannin structure, which is firm and classic. Just feels rich and dramatic, with great

weight and density. Give it a few years in the cellar to mellow, and it should develop for a decade or more. —S.H.

93 Beaulieu Vineyard 2007 Georges de Latour Private Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon (Rutherford); \$115. Dark, bold, potent and young are just a few words to describe this Cabernet, which contains a splash of Petit Verdot and Malbec. Shows concentrated blackberry, black currant and violet flavors that turn sweet and chocolaty on the finish, although the wine itself is perfectly dry. Quite tannic, which suggests ageability, although high alcohol of 15.5% will be controversial in some circles. Best after 2013, in a proper cellar. *Cellar Selection.* —S.H.

93 Monticello 2007 Tietjen Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Rutherford); \$65. Deeply scented, a big, powerhouse Cabernet grown on the Rutherford bench. It's dense, chewy and meaty, showing blackberry jam, blueberry, chocolate and sweet smoky oak. The tannins are thick and furry, as befits such a young, ageable wine. Hold until 2013, and it should develop through 2019. *Cellar Selection.* —S.H.

93 Rubicon Estate 2007 Rutherford; \$145. New oak stands out in toast and caramelized wood sweetness on this Cab, overshadowing to some degree the underlying blackberry, cherry and black currant fruit. It's quite a fashionable, delectable young wine, and will probably be consumed too early by many people who buy it, but it's really a cellar candidate. Made with a few drops of Petit Verdot and Cabernet Franc, it should develop for 12–15 years. *Cellar Selection.* —S.H.

92 6 North 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$52. This new brand is sourced from various vineyards throughout the valley. It's very ripe and interesting, offering the rich flavors and balance of the vintage. Gentle now in blackberries, black currants, anise and sweet cedar wood, and should develop over the next 5–6 years. —S.H.

92 Bonterra 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (Mendocino-Lake); \$16. A wonderful red wine, full-bodied, dry and elegant. It shows Cabernet character in the blackberries, cherries and black currants, but that's balanced with an earthiness and minerality and even some smoked meat notes that must come from a per-

centage of Syrah and Petite Sirah. Tasted in a flight of much more expensive Cabs, this one easily stood out. Drink now–2011. *Editors' Choice.* —S.H.

92 Etude 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon (Oakville); \$100. Here's a Cabernet to age for a while. It's very dry and richly flavored in classic varietal flavors of blackberries, black currants and cedar, with finely ground, intense tannins. But it has a youthful immaturity that simply isn't ready to appreciate now. Really needs time for all the parts to mesh together. Give it until 2012, and it should develop bottle complexity for another 5–6 years. *Cellar Selection.* —S.H.

92 Etude 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon (Rutherford); \$100. This is a very nice Cabernet that feels rich in the mouth, a wine that will have everybody remarking on its smooth, velvety texture. Taste-wise, it shows an olive tinge to the red and black cherry fruit, with a beautiful overlay of smoky oak. You can drink it now, with a good decant, and it should develop in the bottle over the next 6–9 years, if not longer. —S.H.

92 Lieff 2007 Auberge Road Cabernet Sauvignon (Rutherford); \$75. Made in a lean, elegantly structured manner, with modulated coffee, violet and mineral notes to the sour cherry candy fruit. Quite tannic, too, with a zesty bite of acidity. A bit austere and shut down now, and should slowly develop bottle softness and complexity after 2013. *Cellar Selection.* —S.H.

92 Meander 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$65. A beautiful 100% Cabernet that comes from Rutherford and St. Helena. It's soft and dry and ultrarich, with blackberry, cherry, licorice, cola, spice and smoky new oak flavors. Seems best now and through 2014. —S.H.

92 Piña 2007 Firehouse Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Rutherford); \$85. Classic Rutherford Cab. Dry, dusty and slightly herbal, with refined, jammy flavors of red and black cherries, currants, mocha and cedar. The alcohol is a little high, giving this 100% Cabernet a warm, full-bodied feel. The tannins suggest mid-term aging. 2013–2018. *Cellar Selection.* —S.H.

92 Provenance Vineyards 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Rutherford);

\$40. This beautiful Bordeaux blend is based mostly on Cabernet Sauvignon. It's likeable now for the soft, refined texture and luscious flavors of tart cherry candy, accented with nearly half new oak. Shows real balance and flair, from a winery known for objective pricing. Now–2013. *Editors' Choice.* —S.H.

92 Rutherford Grove 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Rutherford); \$45. Textbook Rutherford Cab. It's forward and lush now in ripe black and red cherry pie and dusty spice flavors, with oak adding caramel, smoke and buttered toast notes. Feels opulent and fat and just plain good. Should continue to evolve in the bottle for years. —S.H.

92 Sawyer 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Rutherford); \$48. A beautifully accessible wine, polished, pretty and likeable now for its gentle texture and silky tannins. The sweet cherry and raspberry fruit is encircled with a coat of fancy smoked oak. Made from 100% Cabernet, the wine is balanced enough to gain bottle complexity for a decade. —S.H.

92 Slaughterhouse Cellars 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Rutherford); \$50. There's lots of new French oak on this Cabernet, but the underlying wine is powerful enough to take it. Shows rich, gentle tannins and fine acidity framing complex, flavorful cherry, blackberry and raspberry fruit. The near-perfect balance suggests cellaring for a decade or longer, although the wine is pretty enough to drink now. —S.H.

92 Sullivan 2007 Estate Cabernet Sauvignon (Rutherford); \$55. Here's a powerful Cabernet Sauvignon, ripe and opulent, offering summer blackberry, sour cherry candy, currant, dried herb and rose petal aromas and flavors. The addition of 21% Merlot brings a candied softness, but it's still pretty tannic, and wants 4–5 years in the cellar. —S.H.

92 Tres Sabores 2007 Perspective Cabernet Sauvignon (Rutherford); \$80. Young and oaky now, with toast, vanilla and woodspice aromas and flavors that tend to dominate the underlying cherry, cranberry and raspberry fruit. Feels fat and sweetly opulent, with smooth, fine tannins. Should develop gradually over the next decade. —S.H.

92 Vina Robles 2007 Suendero (Paso Robles); \$49. A little soft in acidity, in the way of Paso wines, but with just-in-time zest and tannins that give the flavors some structure. Mainly Cabernet Sauvignon, with 14% Petit Verdot, the wine is dry and rich, with blackberry, currant, cola, dark chocolate, violet, anise and cedar flavors. One of the more complex Bordeaux-style wines from this area. Drink now. —S.H.

91 Frog's Leap 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Rutherford); \$75. Frog's Leap strove for elegance above power in this modulated, ageworthy wine. Tasted against bigger, riper Cabs, it's almost lean, with herb-infused red cherry, violet and mineral flavors, wrapped into complex tannins. The alcohol is a refreshingly low 13.6%. This is a connoisseur's wine, and it should develop for 10–15 years in a proper cellar. **Cellar Selection.** —S.H.

91 Skyhawk Lane 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Paso Robles); \$48. An interesting wine for its moderate alcohol and extreme dryness. Leaner and more structured than a plump Napa Cab, it shows juicy blackberry, currant, mineral and oak flavors that are streamlined and elegant. A bite of alcohol makes this pretty wine balanced and clean through the finish. —S.H.

91 St. Clement 2007 Oropas Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$55. Continues a string of successful bottlings of this Cabernet. The flavors are strong but subtle, suggesting blackberries and black currants, with earthier notes of dark chocolate and roasted almonds. Very good, but also pretty tannic. You'll want to cellar this for 5–6 years to let it mellow. **Cellar Selection.** —S.H.

91 White Cottage Ranch 2007 Risa Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$40. What a nice Cabernet this is. It's so dry and well-structured, tantalizing your palate with hints of richness instead of swamping it with fruit and oak. Shows summer-ripe, briary blackberry and black currant flavors, with grounding notes of dried herbs, violets, tobacco, licorice and cedar, leading to a distinguished finish. Now–2013. —S.H.

90 Bugay 2007 The Empress Cabernet Sauvignon (Sonoma County); \$75. There's a good wine in here, but it needs some time to escape the cage of hard tannins and

primary fruit. Floods the mouth with blackberry pie, crème de cassis and sweet, vanilla oak flavors that are just itching for a good 5–7 years in the cellar. **Cellar Selection.** —S.H.

90 Falcone 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (Paso Robles); \$30. A terrific Cabernet made from a blend of various Paso Robles vineyards. Just delicious, a young, softly appealing wine brimming with blackberry, cherry, currant, mocha and cedar flavors. Beautiful now, especially with a grilled steak or lamb chop. —S.H.

90 Frog's Leap 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Rutherford); \$75. Frog's Leap strove for elegance above power in this modulated wine. It's delicate in the mouth, with complex notes of herbs, cherry tart, cherry Lifesaver candy and cedar wood. Turns a bit sharp in the finish, with a cut of acidity that should help the wine age for 6–8 years. —S.H.

90 Hewitt 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Rutherford); \$85. Made from 100% Cabernet, this wine is very extracted and jammy, in the modern style of extreme ripeness and fruit-forwardness. Sweet oak, 70% of it new, adds layers of cream, vanilla and buttered toast. Appeals now for its juicy, New World style. —S.H.

90 Louis M. Martini 2006 Lot 1 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$120. At the age of four years, this Cab strikes you as very fruity and also sharp. It has jammy cherry, blackberry, black currant and baker's chocolate flavors that taste like they have a squirt of lime juice for tartness. The oak overlay is strong in char and vanilla, but balanced. The overall impression is of power and elegance, but immaturity. Try holding until 2013, and could develop for many years. **Cellar Selection.** —S.H.

90 Sineann 2008 Sugarloaf Mountain Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (California); \$42. Deeply flavored, offering a flood of ripe blackberry and black cherry fruit, liberally enhanced with sweet, smoky oak. The tannins are rich and soft, and acidity is brisk. Immature now, and needs time. Give it a good five years and see what happens. **Cellar Selection.** —S.H.

90 Starmont 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$27. Pretty good price for a Cabernet this elegant and rich. Starmont is a kind of second label to the excel-

lent producer, Merryvale, and this '07 shows a fine pedigree, as well as the general quality of the vintage. It's dry and balanced, with complex blackberry, currant and oak flavors. Drink now–2013. —S.H.

90 Watkins Family 2006 Nuns Cliff Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Sonoma Valley); \$38. What's so likeable about this Cabernet is the dryness and the overall balance, which is stylish and elegant. It keeps the blackberry and black currant fruit in check with earthier tones of tobacco and olives. —S.H.

89 Ellman Family 2007 Jemma (Napa Valley); \$79. Hard to appreciate this pricey blend of Cabernet, Merlot and Malbec right now, it's so sharp and tannic and jammy. The big question is whether or not it will age. The signs are there. One of the winemakers, Kian Tavakoli, worked at Opus One. The grapes come from Beckstoffer, in Oakville. Based on that, you might want to give it a good six years in the cellar. —S.H.

89 Farrier 2007 Countenance (Alexander Valley); \$35. A lovely Bordeaux blend, fruity and incredibly rich. Mainly Cabernet Sauvignon, it shows the Alexander Valley's soft tannins and herb-tinged flavors of blackberries and black cherries, topped with smoky sweet new oak. Easy to like now with a charred steak. —S.H.

89 Louis M. Martini 2006 Monte Rosso Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Sonoma Valley); \$85. Young and fruity, offering an explosion of jammy cherries, blackberries and currants. Oak adds a framework of wood tannins that join grapeskin tannins to provide astringency and bite. Immature, and the question is ageability. Hold until 2013, but longterm prospects seem risky, given a certain raisiny superripeness. —S.H.

89 Martin Estate 2007 Collector's Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon (Rutherford); \$120. A good 100% Cabernet, with complex, pleasant cherry, blackberry and oak flavors. Quite tannic now, with a sandpapery mouthfeel, and very full-bodied. Feels a little ponderous, but could be going through an awkward phase. Try again after 2013. —S.H.

89 Terlato 2007 Devils' Peak (Napa Valley); \$48. This is a lush wine, rich in

fruit. It offers waves of cherries, blackberries, plums, cola, currants and licorice, and turns very spicy on the finish. Feels good and softly tannic and interesting in the mouth, with a fine bite of acidity. Seems best now and over the next 5–6 years. —S.H.

89 Watkins Family 2007 Nuns Cliff Cabernet Sauvignon (Sonoma Valley); \$38. Tastes a bit jammy sweet and direct now, with strong flavors of blackberries, cherries and raspberries. Seems to need a year or three in the cellar to let everything soften and integrate. But it's not a 20-year wine. *Cellar Selection.* —S.H.

88 Bugay 2007 Incline One-Nine Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon (Sonoma County); \$90. This is a very fruity Cabernet in which blackberries, black cherries, currants, licorice and cola star, along with oak influences. It's bone dry, and the tannins are thick and firm, but finely ground. Jammy and immature, the wine wants time in the cellar. Hold until after 2013 and see what happens. *Cellar Selection.* —S.H.

88 Chateau St. Jean 2006 Eighty-Five Fifty-Five (Sonoma County); \$60. A Cabernet-based Bordeaux blend with 4% Syrah, this is an exuberantly fruity wine. It offers plenty of cherry, berry, licorice, cola and bacon flavors, with firm tannins. Feels a bit sharp toward the finish, but barbecue will balance it out. Now–2013. —S.H.

88 Etude 2007 GBR (Carneros); \$60. This is a dry, tannic and extracted young red wine. Made mainly from Merlot, with 15% Malbec, it has blackberry, black currant and dark chocolate flavors. Feels fancy in the mouth, and might pick up some bottle complexity over the next 3–4 years. —S.H.

88 Schug 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Sonoma Valley); \$28. Here's a solid, restaurant-style Cabernet that's dry and balanced enough to co-star with your food, rather than dominate it. It's a subdued wine, but quite elegant, with complex flavors of black cherries, currants, licorice and cedar wood. Drink now. —S.H.

88 Simi 2007 Landslide Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Alexander Valley); \$35. This is a good, full-bodied, dry Cabernet that delivers with plenty of varietal per-

sonality. Shows very ripe, concentrated blackberry, cherry and currant flavors, with plenty of sweet oak, and is tannic enough to develop over the next 4–6 years. Easy to find, with 12,000 cases produced. —S.H.

88 Titus 2007 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$60. The 80% new oak on this wine really sticks out, giving toasty, caramelized and vanilla bean notes. That makes the underlying cherry, blackberry and raspberry fruit, which is superripe, taste jammy, almost sweet. The result is a little in your face, but it's quite a rich wine that might develop some bottle nuance over the next 4–6 years. —S.H.

87 Bugay 2007 Les Rocheuses Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon (Sonoma County); \$90. Oak and superripe fruit collaborate to make this wine taste like a fruity granola bar, with raspberries, blackberries, roasted almonds, caramel and cinnamon spices. It's a bit obvious now, too young and fresh for subtlety, especially at this price. Could develop nuances over time. Give it 5–6 years and try again. *Cellar Selection.* —S.H.

87 Damian Rae 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$59. Very forward in jammy fruit, with waves of blackberries, cherries, raspberries, red currants, mocha and caramelized new oak. Feels too soft and melted to do much in the cellar, so drink up. —S.H.

87 Farrier 2007 Presshouse (Alexander Valley); \$30. This Cabernet Franc-based Bordeaux blend is softly approachable now for its wealth of black and red cherry, currant and toasty oak flavors. It has rich tannins and a long, spicy finish. Should hold in the bottle and possibly gain momentum for 4–5 years. —S.H.

87 Hanna 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Alexander Valley); \$30. Give this lusty young Cabernet a few years to let the parts mellow. Right now, it's tannic and sharp, with black currant and blackberry jam flavors, and the oak hasn't been integrated with the fruit. 2011–2014. —S.H.

87 Hawkes 2006 Red Winery Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Alexander Valley); \$60. A bit more direct than the '05, which must be due to the so-so vintage. The wine is soft and immediately appealing

for its red berry pie filling, red currant, baking spice, green olive tapenade and oak flavors. Should develop for years in the bottle, without necessarily gaining additional complexity. —S.H.

87 Honig 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$40. A pretty good Cab that shows plenty of richness. May lack a bit in nuance, but on the other hand, a little cellaring could benefit. As currently constructed, it's rich and forward in berry-cherry fruit and oak, with lots of spices, and tastes a bit jammy-sweet. Honig's single-vineyard Cabs always seem much better than their generic Napa Valley. —S.H.

87 Kunde 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Sonoma Valley); \$17. This is a sound Cabernet Sauvignon. It's very dry and quite tannic, with pure blackberry, black currant and blueberry flavors, and it finishes with a soft gentleness. At its best now, and the price is good for the quality. —S.H.

87 Simi 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Alexander Valley); \$24. A dry, lovely Cabernet for drinking now. Shows the soft tannins and herbaceousness of Alexander Valley reds, with cherry, berry, currant and oak flavors. Earns extra points for the smooth, spicy finish. —S.H.

87 Sterling 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$25. This is a good, dry, somewhat rugged Cabernet, rich in varietal blackberry and black currant flavors with a coating of smoky oak. It's fully ready to drink now. Shows real elegance in the refined mouthfeel, and the spicy finish is a delight. —S.H.

87 Terlato 2007 Cardinals' Peak (Napa Valley); \$48. Delicious, showing the pure fruit flavors of blackberries, black cherries and raspberries that taste like they were baked into a pie, then sprinkled with cinnamon, cocoa and vanilla dust. Lots of toasty oak, too. Easy to drink now. —S.H.

87 Terlato 2007 Angels' Peak (Napa Valley); \$48. Tastes direct and a little rustic, offering plenty of blackberry, cherry and black currant fruit that finishes dry. A very good, rich wine, but somewhat linear now, especially for the price. —S.H.

87 Vin Roc 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$90. This expensive

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Cabernet isn't showing well now. It's all fruit and no subtlety. Offers wave after wave of blackberries, cherries, plums, currants, chocolate and licorice, and feels so soft, it could almost be from Paso Robles. Hard to predict its future. —S.H.

87 William Harrison 2007 Rutherford Red (Rutherford); \$80. Starts off with oaky, jammy aromas of cherries and raspberries, and tastes a little sweet in fruit pastry, with the baked crust. Seems a little one-dimensional, although that dimension is a very delicious one. Cabernet Sauvignon, Petit Verdot, Cabernet Franc and Malbec. —S.H.

86 Ben Hogan 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (Paso Robles); \$27. A good, fruity, everyday Cabernet. It's a little too sharp throughout, but offers fine blackberry, blueberry, currant and licorice flavors. Ready now. —S.H.

86 Jordan 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon (Alexander Valley); \$52. Tastes a bit raw and herbal in the mouth, like a piece of celery, although there are also richer blackberry and cherry flavors. Yet it's a dry, elegantly constructed Cabernet. Best soon, before the fruit disappears. —S.H.

86 Napa Station 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$20. Shows classic Napa varietal flavors of blackberries and black currants, with a sweet overlay of smoky cedar wood, and the wine is soft and dry. It's not the most complex Cabernet, but the price is fair for the quality. —S.H.

86 Pedroncelli 2008 Three Vineyards Cabernet Sauvignon (Dry Creek Valley); \$16. Here's a bone-dry, somewhat lean Cabernet. It has tobacco and blackberry flavors, framed in rich, furry tannins. Quite a nice sipper for drinking now with grilled steaks and chops. —S.H.

86 Terlato 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Rutherford); \$60. Sweet and jammy in raspberry, cherry and blackberry fruit, with spicy, pie-filling flavors enhanced with plenty of toasty oak. Rather forward now, with firm tannins. Decant before drinking with steak, chops, or even a chocolate dessert. —S.H.

86 Terlato 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Stags Leap District); \$60. Marked by superripe, jammy blackberry and currant fla-

vors that taste like they were baked into a pie, this Cab also has plenty of sweet, caramelized oak. It leaves little to the imagination. Good, but would benefit from greater nuance and complexity. —S.H.

85 Healdsburg Ranches 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (Sonoma County); \$10. Good price for a nice, dry Cabernet with so much fruit. It's forward in ripe blackberry, blueberry and cherry jam flavors, with a rich coat of smoky oak. **Best Buy.** —S.H.

85 Magness 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$20. Here's a good Cabernet to drink now. It's soft and gritty in tannins, with ripely forward blackberry, cherry and currant flavors, coated with sweet, smoky oak. —S.H.

85 Rodrigue Molyneaux 2006 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon (Livermore Valley); \$24. Soft, fruity, dry and hot, with jammy cherry and raspberry flavors, touched with smoky oak. If you like this high alcohol style, the wine is for you. —S.H.

84 Arrow Creek 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon (California); \$18. Jammy and sweet in blackberries, cherries and blueberries, with a vanilla and caramel richness. A bit simple, but fans of fruity wines will like it. —S.H.

84 Delicato 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon (California); \$7. A good buy for its dryness and overall balance. You won't mistake it for a cult Cabernet, but the blackberry and currant flavors work. **Best Buy.** —S.H.

84 Huntington 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (California); \$14. Soft and jammy in blackberries and cherries, with a sweet oak edge. A good, everyday Cabernet to drink now. —S.H.

84 Rodrigue Molyneaux 2005 Cabernet Sauvignon (Livermore Valley); \$32. Hits the mouth with a disagreeable sharpness that accentuates the tannins, making it harder to appreciate the cherry, blackberry and currant flavors. The fruit and oak are fine, but the texture needs fine tuning. —S.H.

84 Still Waters 2006 Estate Barrel Select Cabernet Sauvignon (Paso Robles); \$42. Tastes softly tannic, superripe

and simple, with oaky flavors of cherry and blackberry jam and spices. Not much going on. Drink now. —S.H.

83 Mirassou 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (California); \$12. Simple and jammy, with raspberry and cherry flavors. It's a totally dry wine, with a fresh cut of acidity. —S.H.

82 Rangeland 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Paso Robles); \$39. Drily harsh and Porty, with raisinskin bitterness. Shows some good blackberry fruit, but the texture is hard to like. —S.H.

81 Glass Mountain 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (California); \$7. A hard, tough, astringent Cabernet that almost hurts the mouth. It's acidic and dry. —S.H.

MERLOT

96 Chateau St. Jean 2005 Reserve Merlot (Sonoma County); \$90. Easily one of the greatest California Merlots ever. Notable for its complete balance. Nothing sticks out; all the parts work together. The black cherry, plum, black currant, dark chocolate and licorice fruit is big, but perfectly balanced with smoky, sweet oak, while a subtle touch of violets brings a smack of the earth. The tannin-acid structure is just beautiful. Will continue to develop bottle complexity for at least six more years. **Editors' Choice.** —S.H.

94 White Cottage Ranch 2007 Estate Merlot (Howell Mountain); \$50. The best things about this Merlot are its extreme dryness, tannin integrity and relative austerity. It's a pleasure to drink a Merlot that's not a fruit bomb. That doesn't mean you won't find complex flavors of blackberries and currants. You will. It means that this extraordinary Merlot is pushing the envelope on what California, and Napa Valley in particular, is able to achieve in making Merlot along classically structured lines. **Editors' Choice.** —S.H.

90 Gainey 2007 Limited Selection Merlot (Santa Ynez Valley); \$38. Dry, juicy, ripe and balanced, Gainey's best Merlot since 2005. As they've begun sourcing grapes from farther inland, the wine has grown richer. Shows a nice integration of oak with flavors of currants and red licorice, with a distinguished finish. Now–2013. —S.H.

88 Starmont 2007 Merlot (Napa Valley); \$26. A dry, gentle Merlot, likeable for its rich tannic structure and complex flavors. Shows berry, cherry, currant, dark chocolate and sandalwood flavors, with a clean, spicy finish. Drink now with a nice grilled steak, brushed with garlic butter and plenty of pepper. —S.H.

87 Albeno Munari 2007 Merlot (Calaveras County); \$22. Hard to beat the delicious flavors in this mountain Merlot. It explodes in the mouth with blackberry jam, cherry liqueur, melted milk chocolate, licorice and sweet oak flavors. Pretty good in the modern style, with a minor quibble that there's some sharpness throughout. —S.H.

87 Huntington 2008 Merlot (California); \$14. Lots of fresh, ripe blackberry and cherry fruit in this clean, vibrant Merlot. It's soft and dry, with enough tannins to give it a little bite. Drink now with meats, roast chicken, cheeses. —S.H.

87 Robert Mondavi 2007 Merlot (Napa Valley); \$23. Here's a good, sound Merlot that's fancy enough to serve with special fare. It's dry and rich in tannins, with oak-inspired black cherry, currant and pepper flavors. Easy to find, with 29,000 cases produced. The alcohol measures 16%. —S.H.

87 Schug 2007 Merlot (Sonoma Valley); \$28. This is a light, elegant Merlot for drinking now. It's very dry, and has pleasant berry, red currant, herb and cedar flavors. A good restaurant wine that won't overwhelm the food. —S.H.

87 Still Waters 2006 Merlot (Paso Robles); \$22. This is a very dry, soft Merlot. At the age of four years, it's fully resolved and ready to drink now. Shows polished cherry, currant, spice and cedar flavors, finished with a bite of acidity. —S.H.

86 Stave 28 2007 Raven Merlot (Napa Valley); \$29. Feels a bit sharp and aggressive in the mouth, with acidity cutting across the currant, licorice and cola flavors. The wine also is very dry and fairly tannic. The impression is of a lack of generosity, especially at this price. —S.H.

85 Napa Station 2007 Merlot (Napa Valley); \$19. A little rough and ready

around the edges, but nice and dry, with firm tannins framing black cherry, cola and oak flavors. —S.H.

85 Q Sonoma 2008 Merlot (Sonoma County); \$17. A sound, everyday wine with some special qualities. It's dryish and super-fruity in cherries and raspberries, and even has some salty, smoky notes of bacon. The alcohol is refreshingly low. —S.H.

84 Arrow Creek 2009 Merlot (California); \$18. Here's a sweetly simple Merlot. It's juicy and jammy in ripe cherries and berries, with a spicy finish. Drink now with everyday fare. —S.H.

84 St. Clement 2007 Merlot (Napa Valley); \$28. Simple and fruity, a sharply acidic, dry wine with forward cherry, raspberry and green mint flavors. Drink now. —S.H.

83 Mirassou 2008 Merlot (California); \$12. Minty sharp, like a peppermint sour candy, with raspberry jam flavors. Although the wine is nice and dry, it's pretty simple. —S.H.

83 Rangeland 2007 Merlot (Paso Robles); \$29. With hard tannins and a jagged mouthfeel, this Merlot tastes fairly simple in cherry and cola flavors, accented with sweet oak. Drink now. —S.H.

82 Longevity 2008 Merlot (Livermore Valley); \$23. Tough and leathery. Shows briary blackberry and cherry fruit and oak flavors, with a bitter, sharp finish. Okay for everyday purposes. —S.H.

82 Sineann 2008 Sugarloaf Mountain Vineyard Merlot (California); \$30. Soft and sweet in Porty cherry, chocolate and raisin flavors, with a burn from high alcohol. Drink now. —S.H.

PINOT NOIR

95 Etude 2007 Deer Camp Pinot Noir (Carneros); \$60. This has been one of Etude's best bottlings, and 2007 was a great year. If you enjoy sheer, decadent deliciousness in your Pinot Noirs, this is one for you. The palate first is struck by the rich waves of cherry pie filling, raspberry essence and sweet, vanilla-tinged, smoky oak. Then it discovers the soft silkiness, and

finally the firm, fine tannins kick in, providing structure. Just beguiling, and should develop in the bottle over the next 5–6 years. —S.H.

95 Gainey 2008 Limited Selection Pinot Noir (Sta. Rita Hills); \$48. An absolutely lovely Pinot, the best in Gainey's long career. Dry, smooth and silky, it defines Pinot's more Burgundian side, with mushroomy notes along with perfectly ripe cherries and raspberries, accented with brilliant acidity. The oak treatment is tasteful and blends in seamlessly, offering a hint of toast. The wine treads an exciting line between ripeness and earthiness, while keeping alcohol to a refreshingly low 14.1%. This is a connoisseur's wine. *Editors' Choice.* —S.H.

95 MacRostie 2007 Wildcat Mountain Vineyard Pinot Noir (Sonoma Coast); \$40. MacRostie's Pinots from this vineyard on the edge of the Sonoma side of Carneros always are big, ripe, powerful and ageable. This '07 shows the fat, ripe character of the vintage, offering luscious raspberry, cherry, cola, red currant liqueur, bacon, anise, spice and sandalwood flavors. But it's balanced enough to change in interesting ways over the next 5–7 years. Really a glamorous wine for your best meals. *Editors' Choice.* —S.H.

94 Etude 2007 Temblor Pinot Noir (Carneros); \$60. Shows the Etude signature of extraordinary richness and great structure, along with the paradox of early appeal combined with ageability. Floods the mouth with raspberry, cherry, orange zest, Dr. Pepper cola, vanilla and sweet oak flavors that turn dry and refined in the finish. This bottling continues to be one of the best, most flamboyantly enjoyable Carneros Pinot Noirs. —S.H.

94 Etude 2007 Heirloom Pinot Noir (Carneros); \$90. Made in the Heirloom style, which is huge, extracted and potent. The '07 shows the preternatural ripeness of the vintage, offering massive cherry and black raspberry fruit, along with sizable tannins. The wine-maker has framed this power with considerable oak. The result admittedly is seismic, but it is another success for Heirloom, and is likely to age for at least a dozen years. —S.H.

94 Rusack 2008 Rancho Santa Rosa Pinot Noir (Sta. Rita Hills); \$45. Rusack's best 2008 Pinot comes from this great vineyard that displays such fine Santa Rita Hills

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character. It's ripe enough in cherries to satisfy, and also brisk in acidity, with complex mineral and herb notes, and the oak barrel layering is perfect. Lovely now for its silky texture, and will develop over the next 5–7 years. —S.H.

93 Belle Glos 2008 Taylor Lane Vineyard Pinot Noir (Sonoma Coast); \$44. The best of Belle Glos's 2008 Pinots. It's notable for the extreme richness of the raspberries and cherries, which have a jammy intensity with even more succulent notes of vanilla cream and smoky butter. But the finish is dry, while acidity and tannins bring the wine to earth. Delicious now and through 2014. —S.H.

93 Conspire 2008 Russian River Pinot Noir (Sonoma County); \$42. Richly textured, this Pinot comes from the Sebastopol area. In this cool vintage, it has a bright burst of acidity and is very dry, with intricate flavors of raspberries, cherries, pomegranates, licorice, sweet oak and lots of dusty spices. Now–2014. —S.H.

93 Testarossa 2008 Brosseau Vineyard Pinot Noir (Chalone); \$54. A beautiful Pinot Noir. So dry and elegant, so light and crisp in the mouth, and yet so complex. Continues a string of impressive wines from this remote vineyard. Shows mineral-inflected cherry, currant and cola flavors, in a full-bodied wine with great density and finish. Now–2016, at least. *Cellar Selection.* —S.H.

92 Feliz Noche 2007 Pinot Noir (Santa Barbara County); \$95. Tons of flavor in this Pinot. Dazzles with waves of cherries, rhubarb, pomegranate, cola, currants and licorice, accented with swanky oak. The texture is firm and silky, the finish thoroughly dry. A real beauty that should develop complexity for a decade. The grapes are from Santa Rita Hills, so why doesn't the label say so? —S.H.

92 Riverbench 2008 Mesa Pinot Noir (Santa Maria Valley); \$48. This has been Riverbench's best Pinot and it still is. Shows the wonderful ability to be deliciously drinkable now, yet with the stuffing for the cellar. Dry and crisp and full-bodied, it shows berry, currants, mushroom, grilled meat and sandalwood flavors, dusted with Indian spices. Now–2015. —S.H.

92 Rusack 2008 Reserve Pinot Noir (Sta. Rita Hills); \$40. This is a fine

example of a fresh, complex, young Santa Rita Hills Pinot Noir. It's bone dry and elegantly crisp, with intricate flavors of cherries, rhubarb, pomegranates, Dr. Pepper cola and minerals, along with sweet, smoky notes from oak barrel aging. Best of all is the silky texture. Fine now, with decanting, and through 2014. —S.H.

91 Belle Glos 2008 Las Alturas Vineyard Pinot Noir (Monterey County); \$44. Impresses for the sheer volume of fruit, offering waves of pie filling raspberries, cherries and red currants, with notes of cocoa, bacon, sweet oak and savory spices. A good bite of Central Coast acidity fortunately brings briskness to the richness. Drink now–2012. —S.H.

91 Rusack 2008 Pinot Noir (Santa Maria Valley); \$36. This is a beautiful Pinot Noir for drinking over the next few years. It's bone dry, and shows the classic structure you want from a Pinot Noir, with brisk acidity and gentle tannins framing spicy flavors of black cherries, pomegranates and cola. —S.H.

91 Rusack 2008 Solomon Hills Vineyard Pinot Noir (Santa Maria Valley); \$45. Give this fresh young Pinot a few years to come around. Right now, it's brisk in primary fruit cherry, blackberry and cola flavors, with bright acidity and furry tannins. Shows all the hallmarks of a wine that wants age. Should develop after 2013. —S.H.

90 Healdsburg Ranches 2009 Appellation Series Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); \$19. Great price for a Pinot Noir this rich and fancy. It really flatters the palate, offering waves of raspberry, cherry, root beer, vanilla and sandalwood flavors, with a spicy finish. The light, silky texture is especially nice, as is the low alcohol balance. *Editors' Choice.* —S.H.

89 Saintsbury 2009 Garnet Pinot Noir (Carneros); \$18. Garnet long has been one of California's greatest entry-level Pinot Noirs, and it still is. Maybe the best. The '09 reflects the balanced vintage. It's a dry, silky, light-bodied wine, with pretty raspberry and cola flavors. *Editors' Choice.* —S.H.

89 Terlato 2008 Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); \$60. An interesting and challenging wine. Shows some funky, mushroomy notes, along with flavors of cherries, cola, rhubarb and green tomato jam, accompanied by high acid-

ity. It's Burgundian, in its own way, and could develop in the bottle. Now–2014. —S.H.

88 Belle Glos 2008 Clark & Telephone Vineyard Pinot Noir (Santa Maria Valley); \$44. Tremendously rich and ripe, this Pinot just dazzles the palate with waves of raspberries, cherries, cocoa, red licorice, bacon and other intense umami flavors. It's dry and silky, but the drawback is excessive softness. —S.H.

88 Chime 2008 Pinot Noir (Anderson Valley); \$18. This is a fine Pinot Noir. May not be as full-bodied or fruity as some, but it's truly elegant, crisply refined, and thoroughly dry, offering raspberry, rhubarb, tangerine zest and Dr. Pepper cola flavors that are wrapped into a silky texture. Production was a low 820 cases. *Editors' Choice.* —S.H.

88 Firefly Night 2008 Lone Oak Vineyard Pinot Noir (Santa Lucia Highlands); \$55. This is a heavy, full-bodied wine, with the weight of a Rhône variety, perhaps Grenache. Purists will criticize it for lacking the elegance you want in an expensive Pinot Noir. It's dry and tannic, with deep flavors of red currants, cherries, licorice, Canadian bacon and peppery spices. Could develop in the bottle, but it's risky. —S.H.

88 Testarossa 2008 Niclaire Pinot Noir (California); \$75. A bit of a let-down after a string of riper, more successful vintages. Feels sharp and somewhat herbal, with a hay or dried wheat edge to the black cherry and rhubarb fruit. Could just be going through a tough period, and might emerge on the other side in 5–6 years. —S.H.

88 Windsor Sonoma 2008 Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); \$28. Here's a sweetly delicious young Pinot whose flavors are designed to please. It floods the mouth with raspberry and cherry jam, anise, cola, pepper and sandalwood notes, brightened with crisp acidity. Drink now. —S.H.

87 Belle Glos 2008 Meiomi Pinot Noir (Sonoma County-Monterey County-Santa Barbara County); \$25. Luscious in candied, pastry-filling raspberries and cherries, with dustings of cocoa, cinnamon and vanilla, and a sweet veneer of smoky sandalwood. Could be somewhat crisper and better

structured, but a delicious Pinot for drinking now. —S.H.

87 Firefly Night 2008 Pinot Noir (Santa Lucia Highlands); \$40. A bit too heavy and direct, offering strong, upfront flavors of red and black berries, stone fruits, cola and currants, liberally spiced and oaked. The mouthfeel is full and weighty, lacking some elegance, but it is totally dry. Could be a sleeper. —S.H.

87 MacMurray Ranch 2008 Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); \$35. Give this fresh young Pinot a year to mellow. Right now, it's jammy in raspberries and cherries, with a citric sharpness. Needs brief time to knit together and become seamless. —S.H.

87 Orogeny 2008 Pinot Noir (Green Valley); \$40. A little sharp in acidity and jammy, with cherry, wintergreen and cola flavors. Nice and dry, with a rich coat of sweet smoky oak, but that sharpness persists through the finish. —S.H.

87 Perbacco Cellars 2007 Dionysus Pinot Noir (Arroyo Grande Valley); \$55. This is the winery's low production barrel selection reserve. It shows big, zingy acidity and spicy, jammy flavors of raspberries and cherries, and is totally dry. The alcohol is refreshingly low. Tastes a bit direct now. Give it until early 2011 to calm down. —S.H.

87 Riverbench 2008 Pinot Noir (Santa Maria Valley); \$28. From the dark color, plummy aroma and heavy mouthfeel, you know this is a big, ponderous Pinot Noir. Nothing light or silky about it. Packs a punch with red berry, mushroom, red currant and smoked meat flavors, with the tannic pack of a Syrah, and finishes very dry. Aging is a gamble. —S.H.

86 Acacia 2008 Winery Lake Vineyard Pinot Noir (Carneros); \$55. The oak sticks out and the underlying cherry and raspberry fruit is rather simple and jammy in this single-vineyard wine. It has positive features, such as a dry silkiness and a nice mushroomy character. But it turns disappointingly thin on the finish. Too bad for a vineyard that used to be among the best in Carneros. —S.H.

86 Castle Rock 2008 Pinot Noir (Carneros); \$14. This dry, silky Pinot

Noir is a good introduction to the variety, for those who want to learn more about it without paying a premium price. It shows proper cherry, raspberry and cola flavors, with a spicy finish. —S.H.

86 Chime 2009 Pinot Noir (California); \$11. A great buy in a useful Pinot Noir that is not without appeal. It's bone dry, tart and elegant, with a light, silky mouthfeel framing cherry and cola flavors. One of the best Pinots at this price range. **Best Buy.** —S.H.

86 Mirassou 2008 Pinot Noir (California); \$12. For the price, you get a very nice expression of California Pinot Noir. The wine is dry, silky and spicy, and surprisingly rich, with flavors of raspberry and cherry pie filling. —S.H.

85 Beaulieu Vineyard 2008 Pinot Noir (Carneros); \$17. A little tough and gritty in the mouth, and lacking in the opulence you want in a Pinot Noir. But it's dry and crisp, and shows some decent cherry, red currant and cola flavors. —S.H.

85 Perbacco Cellars 2007 Pinot Noir (Arroyo Grande Valley); \$30. Pretty fierce in acidity, but flavorful enough, with plenty of raspberry and cherry jam, accented with cola and spices. Drink now, after decanting. —S.H.

84 Rutz 2008 Sonoma Cuvée Pinot Noir (Sonoma County); \$20. Nice and dry, with a silky texture and pleasant cherry, cola and rhubarb flavors. But there's an unpleasant cut of acidity that slices through the palate, leaving behind a green, stinky aftertaste. —S.H.

83 Arrow Creek 2009 Pinot Noir (California); \$18. Dry, sharp and acidic, a lean Pinot Noir. It shows some decent varietal personality in the silky mouthfeel and suggestions of cherries, pomegranates and cola. —S.H.

83 Castle Rock 2009 California Cuvée Pinot Noir (California); \$11. Raw in acids, with jammy raspberry and cherry flavors. Defines the simple, high-production style of Pinot Noir in California. 50,000 cases. —S.H.

82 Beaulieu Vineyard 2009 Coastal Estates Pinot Noir (California); \$8. Dry, sharp and lean. Shows modest cherry and

cedar flavors and a nice silky texture, but it's pretty thin. —S.H.

SYRAH

94 MacRostie 2006 Wildcat Mountain Vineyard Syrah (Sonoma Coast); \$34. Here's a vintage-driven wine that needs the right conditions to succeed, which 2006 provided with its long, cool hangtime. The fruit has ripened to perfection, offering deep flavor notes of blackberries and raspberries. But there are also exotic and delicious notes of bacon, mocha and cola with a blast of black pepper throughout. The wine is full-bodied and dense in tannins, impressive from start to finish. Great now, and should age for 4–6 years. **Editors' Choice.** —S.H.

92 Falcone 2008 Syrah (Paso Robles); \$25. Earns a high score for sheer richness and decadence. Huge in blackberry, blueberry, cassis, dark chocolate, bacon, pepper and oak flavors, wrapped into big, velvety tannins. Impresses for its size, but is totally dry, and retains balance and elegance. Now–2015. **Editors' Choice.** —S.H.

91 Bonterra 2007 Syrah (Mendocino County); \$16. A worthy followup to the wonderful 2006. Shows equal concentration of blackberry, blueberry and licorice flavors, with a bacon and pepper savoriness that tantalizes. The structure is fine and firm, the finish dry and spicy. Drink now for sheer deliciousness. **Editors' Choice.** —S.H.

91 Bradford Mountain 2007 Grist Vineyard Syrah (Dry Creek Valley); \$23. Marked by big, ripe, juicy blackberry, raspberry and currant fruit, this single-vineyard Syrah is saved from simplicity by two things. There are complex notes of bacon, sautéed mushrooms, black pepper and smoky oak, and the tannins are wonderfully rich and ripe. Really delicious. Probably best soon, though, before the fruit fades. —S.H.

90 Bugay 2007 Estate Syrah (Sonoma County); \$45. A deeply colored, rich, vibrant Syrah, ready to drink now. It's gritty in tannins and bone dry, but offers a wealth of ripe, jammy blackberries, cherries, bacon, peppery spices and smoky sandalwood. —S.H.

BUYING GUIDE

90 Kunde 2007 Syrah (Sonoma Valley); \$18. A beautiful Syrah, richly textured and delicious. Held back for three years, it's perfect now for the soft texture, and the raspberry, cherry and orange zest flavors have a spicy edge. Complexity is enhanced with additions of Petite Sirah, Sangiovese, Barbera, Grenache and Viognier. *Editors' Choice.* —S.H.

87 Casa Torres 2006 Syrah (Santa Barbara County); \$32. Nice and dry, with lots of black pepper-infused wild blackberry flavors wrapped into big but pliant tannins. Lots of crunchy acidity, too, which makes the wine sharp. Will be great with a rich steak. —S.H.

87 Fog Head 2007 Blow Sands Syrah (Monterey); \$25. A little soft in texture, but interesting for its mosaic of blackberry, pepper, smoked meat, currant and balsam flavors, and the way the firm tannins provide structure. This bone-dry, big-boned Syrah was grown in the San Bernabe Vineyard of the southern Salinas Valley. —S.H.

87 Inocencio 2008 Syrah (Santa Barbara County); \$32. Sharpness cuts through this Syrah with the citrusy acidity of a lime. The flavors are of blackberries, currants, licorice, bacon and black pepper, and the tannins are as smooth as you could ask for. Ready now. —S.H.

87 Inocencio 2007 Syrah (Central Coast); \$36. Deliciously tasty in blackberry jam, cherry purée, milk chocolate, licorice and peppery spice flavors, with soft, intricate tannins. Feels a bit sharp on the finish, but otherwise a pretty nice Syrah. —S.H.

87 Jorian Hill 2007 Syrah (Santa Ynez Valley); \$24. Good and dry, with very soft, refined tannins and complex flavors. Suffers a bit from arch acidity, but a nice steak should balance it. The delicious flavors include blackberry and cherry jam, licorice, charred meat and a hefty dose of freshly crushed black pepper. —S.H.

87 Silver 2007 Four Bottle Especial Syrah (Santa Barbara County); \$40. The addition of Viognier in the blend is enough to make this Syrah feel tartly acidic and strangely bright in citrus fruits. The limes almost swamp Syrah's underlying cherry-berry and currant flavors. It's a good, bold wine, but an adven-

turous anomaly for a varietal Syrah. Drink it now. —S.H.

86 Ben Hogan 2008 Syrah (Paso Robles); \$27. Here's a Syrah that will appeal to fans of fruit. It shows a burst of blackberries, cherries and raspberries, with an edge of dark chocolate, as well as Syrah's spice and pepper notes. Bone dry and fiercely tannic. —S.H.

85 Beauregard 2006 Zayante Vineyard Syrah (Santa Cruz Mountains); \$45. Starting to lose fruit at the age of four years, with the cherries and blackberries fading into the background, which lets the alcohol show through. Soft, too. Seems a bit threadbare, and probably was better a year ago. —S.H.

85 David Girard 2007 Syrah (El Dorado); \$32. Overtly sweet in cola, chocolate, black cherry purée, glycerine and sandalwood flavors. The sweetness could also be from high alcohol, as the mouthfeel is hot. Drink now. —S.H.

81 Clautiere 2007 Estate Syrah (Paso Robles); \$24. Too ripe and Porty. There's a raisiny, pruny, sugary taste to this wine, and while the official alcohol reading is 14.9%, it tastes hotter than that. —S.H.

PETITE SIRAH

89 Tercero 2007 Petite Sirah (Santa Barbara County); \$28. A nice interpretation of this variety, and one of the best from Santa Barbara County ever. It's bone dry, big in tannins, full-bodied and juicy, in the way of a young Petite Sirah, with blackberry, currant, cola and cedar flavors. Shows real finesse, in a wine that can often be awkward. Now–2015. —S.H.

86 Occasio 2008 Del Arroyo Vineyard Petite Sirah (Livermore Valley); \$32. This fruity Petite Sirah has jammy flavors of blackberries, cherries, plums, currants and bacon, dusted with cocoa and black pepper. It shows the variety's strong tannins, but is soft in acidity. A nice, full-bodied wine to drink now with barbecue. —S.H.

86 Rangeland 2007 Petite Sirah (Paso Robles); \$29. A delicious Petite Sirah, packed with richness. If you can get past the fact that it's too soft and rather light-bodied for this

variety, you'll enjoy the raspberry and cherry jam, cola, red plum, bacon and pepper spice flavors that are almost like Pinot Noir. —S.H.

86 Two Angels 2007 Petite Sirah (High Valley); \$15. This is a dark, full-bodied, tannic, spicy, fruity, rustic wine. In other words, Petite Sirah. It's strong and forward in blackberries, currants, bacon, pepper and oak flavors, and totally dry. Will hold in the bottle for years, without developing complexity. —S.H.

85 Fernwood 2007 Machado Creek Vineyards Petite Sirah (Central Coast); \$30. Tons of upfront fruity flavor mark this crisp, tannic wine. It's almost sweet in jammy cherries and blackberries, with a smoked meat edge of bacon and caramelized notes from oak. Could be drier and have greater structure and complexity. Drink now with robust grilled meats. —S.H.

85 Huntington 2008 Petite Sirah (California); \$14. Jammy, with that sharp, fruity bite of tartness you get from blackberry marmalade. Yet the finish is thoroughly dry. Drink now with casual fare. —S.H.

83 Line 39 2009 Petite Sirah (North Coast); \$9. A common, rustic wine, okay for drinking with everyday fare. It's sharp in acidity and jammy in fruity raspberries and cherries, with a Beaujolais-like gassiness. —S.H.

ZINFANDEL

88 Bugay 2007 Estate Zinfandel (Sonoma County); \$34. This is an extraordinarily rich Zinfandel. It explodes in jammy blackberries, blueberries and cherries, with cola, mocha, currant, smoked meat and black pepper complexities. Could be a bit firmer in acidity, with greater structure, but it's nice and dry. Drink now for fruity exuberance. —S.H.

88 Kunde 2006 Zinfandel (Sonoma Valley); \$18. Held back for four years before release, this Zin has achieved a creamy softness. The flavors offer a blast of peppery, briary wild red, black and blue berries and currants, with vibrant hints of bacon, cola and sandalwood. Great value in a Zinfandel this likeable. *Editors' Choice.* —S.H.

87 Rangeland 2007 Zinfandel (Paso Robles); \$24. Here's a soft, high alcohol, slightly hot Zin, lacking in acidity. What it lacks in structure, it more than makes up for in sheer, exuberant taste. Floods the mouth with raspberries, cherries, dried fruits, dates, bacon, prosciutto, vanilla, smoky sandalwood and all sorts of other umami flavors. —S.H.

85 Healdsburg Ranches 2009 Zinfandel (Sonoma County); \$10. Here's a good, fruity Zinfandel to drink with your barbecue, and the everyday price is right. It's dry and tart in berries, cherries and spices, with Zin's wild, briary personality. **Best Buy.** —S.H.

83 Ben Hogan 2008 Zinfandel (Paso Robles); \$27. Too sweet, with a sugary, dessert wine taste to the briary berries. Otherwise, it's a clean Zinfandel, with good acidity and tannins. —S.H.

83 Bradford Mountain 2007 Grist Vineyard Zinfandel (Dry Creek Valley); \$23. Tastes exaggerated in overripe fruit character, with currant and shriveled raisin flavors. Although the wine is totally dry, its dessicated taste leaves much to be desired. —S.H.

83 Castle Rock 2007 Zinfandel (Mendocino County); \$11. Soft and simple, with candied raspberry, cherry and spice flavors. Okay for drinking at big parties. —S.H.

83 Sera Fina 2008 Zinfandel (Amador County); \$15. Simple, soft and a little dull, with red licorice, cherry pie and bacon flavors. The taste is fine, but the wine needs better structure. —S.H.

82 Zinopolis 2009 Zinfandel (California); \$19. Tastes harshly acidic and dry, lacking richness, with overripe raisin flavors. —S.H.

OTHER RED WINES

93 Falcone NV Annaté II (Paso Robles); \$65. Don't reject this Syrah, Petite Sirah and Cabernet blend because it's non-vintage. So are many great Champagnes. Made from the 2006 and 2007 vintages, it's absolutely delicious, so stuffed with blackberry, black currant and bacon flavors, you can't help but be impressed. It's also very young and fresh in acids

and tannins, so give it a year or two in order to knit together. —S.H.

92 Cambiata 2006 Tannat (Monterey); \$28. No winery in California has explored this French variety more than Cambiata, and with the '06, they've produced another interesting wine. It has weight and body and tannins, with wild black and red berry, currant, cherry liqueur, Provençal herb, tobacco and roasted meat flavors that finish with sweetness, although the wine is totally dry. **Editors' Choice.** —S.H.

92 Vina Robles 2007 Syrée (Paso Robles); \$39. Shows enormous complexity of flavor, a wine that really impresses for its myriad blackberry, cherry, currant, cola, grilled meat, sautéed mushroom, violet and chocolate flavors. If the structure were more firm, it would be a perfect wine. But this is Paso Robles, where the wines will always be soft. A blend of Syrah and Petite Sirah. —S.H.

90 Vina Robles 2007 Signature Estate Cuvée (Paso Robles); \$39. A little too soft in both acidity and tannins to have perfect structure, but it's fine enough, and the flavors certainly are complex and compelling. They range from blackberry tart and cherry pie through Dr. Pepper cola and anise liqueur to bacon and sandalwood. If that sounds good, it is. Ready now. —S.H.

90 White Cottage Ranch 2007 Estate Sangiovese (Howell Mountain); \$45. One of the drier, more elegantly structured Sangiovese out there. It shows subtle red cherry, red currant and tobacco flavors, laced with white pepper. A hard streak of acidity cuts through the middle, suggesting softening things like olive oil, lamb, mozzarella cheese. —S.H.

88 Albeno Munari 2007 Tempranillo (Calaveras County); \$22. A very delicious wine, rich in fruits and spices, and easy to drink for its softness. Shows cherry, mocha, licorice, black pepper and sweet, smoky oak flavors, wrapped into smooth tannins. Ready now. —S.H.

87 Jorian Hill 2007 Beespoke (Santa Ynez Valley); \$38. There's so much raspberry, cherry, cola, clove, cinnamon and pepper flavor in this wine, it's hard to know where to begin. It's also dry, with smoky, vanilla oak notes.

Yet it lacks the vital structure a good Rhône blend wants in order to house all this richness. Drink now. Grenache-Syrah. —S.H.

87 Petroni 2007 Rosso di Sonoma (Sonoma Valley); \$25. Somewhat rugged, with edgy tannins, but very flavorful, a nice wine to have with Italian-inspired pasta dishes. Made from Syrah and Sangiovese, with a splash of Cabernet, it's dry and tart, and shows blackberry, cherry and currant flavors. —S.H.

87 White Cottage Ranch 2007 Estate Cabernet Franc (Howell Mountain); \$51. Nice and dry, with fine, firm tannins. Quite a good wine, but kind of one-dimensional, with ripe red cherry purée and oak flavors that don't develop beyond that in the mouth. Shows the risks when you depend on 100% Cabernet Franc to make a complete wine. —S.H.

86 Bonny Doon 2009 Contra (Central Coast); \$14. Here's a tasty young wine, jammy and rich in fresh blackberries and cherries. With zingy acidity, it's a nice little wine to drink now. Seems to be mainly Carignane. —S.H.

86 Wesley Ashley 2007 Intelligent Design Cuvée (Central Coast); \$38. Carignane, Grenache, Cinsault, Petite Sirah, Mourvèdre and Pinot Noir make up this mongrel blend. The wine is dry and quite complex in berry, leather, cola, currant, spice and cedar flavors, although it's very soft. Not going anywhere, so drink now. —S.H.

85 David Girard 2008 Grenache (El Dorado); \$18. It's all about flavor in this tasty Grenache. It's very rich in raspberries, cherries, mocha, orange zest, cinnamon and vanilla bean, with a touch of smoked butter. Could be drier and firmer, though, as it's a little sweet and soft. —S.H.

85 Petroni 2004 Poggio alla Pietra Brunello di Sonoma Sangiovese (Sonoma Valley); \$60. An awkward wine that, even at six years of age, remains harsh in acidity, tough in tannins and Porty in red cherries and currants, although it is dry. The winery needs to figure out how to build in finesse, complexity and ageability. —S.H.

84 Ben Hogan 2008 Carnoustie (Paso Robles); \$27. Jammy sweet and spicy, like blackberry, cherry and raspberry pie filling.

BUYING GUIDE

Could use more finesse, but it sure is rich. A blend of Syrah, Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot. —S.H.

84 David Girard 2008 Estate Vineyard Mourvèdre (El Dorado); \$34. Light in color and in body, like a Pinot Noir, this Mourvèdre has forward, rich flavors of cherries and orange zest, accented with sweet, toasty oak. It's simple and rather sweet, like melted pie filling. —S.H.

84 Hovey 2008 Roller Cuvée Tempranillo (Calaveras County); \$16. Soft, slightly sweet and fruity, with raspberry jam, chocolate and pepper spice flavors. A country wine with a simple structure. —S.H.

84 Lava Cap 2007 Reserve Grenache (El Dorado); \$18. The hot climate in which the grapes were grown shows in this wine's extreme softness and jammy ripeness. It's almost sweet, like a cherry and raspberry pastry. —S.H.

84 Long Gamma 2007 Red (Sonoma County); \$12. This blend of Zinfandel, Syrah and Petite Sirah is soft and fruity. It has simple, rather sweet raspberry tart, vanilla and black pepper flavors. Okay for an everyday red wine. —S.H.

84 Still Waters 2007 Malbec (Paso Robles); \$28. Soft, fruity and very oaky, with vanilla and caramel aromas and flavors dominating. The raspberry and milk chocolate flavors are almost sweet. Seems pricey for what you get. —S.H.

83 Four Brix 2008 California; \$35. A fairly coarse wine, thin in texture and tart, with unbalanced green peppercorn, mint, berry and cola flavors. Syrah, Mourvèdre, Grenache and Cunoise. —S.H.

83 R Collection 2007 Lot No. 3 Field Blend (California); \$15. This blend of many varieties is full-bodied, dry and tannic. It's the sort of red wine to drink with barbecue and not worry about analyzing. —S.H.

ROSÉ WINES

91 Jorian Hill 2009 Hope Springs Eternal Rosé (Santa Ynez Valley); \$18. Kudos to Jorian Hill for crafting a rosé that's

truly dry. It's a sophisticated, elegant blush wine with subtle raspberry, herb, rose petal, spice and mineral flavors, finished with a wonderfully clean scour of acidity. This Provençal blend of Syrah, Grenache and Mourvèdre is one of the best rosés of the year and is reasonably priced. *Editors' Choice.* —S.H.

85 Bonterra 2009 Rosé (Mendocino County); \$14. Here's an easy-drinking, inexpensive rosé that's perfect for summer occasions. Made from an unusual blend of Sangiovese, Zinfandel, Carignane and Grenache, it's dryish, crisp and clean, with berry and spice flavors. —S.H.

83 Curtis 2009 Heritage Rosé (Santa Barbara County); \$14. This is a Provençal-style blush made of Mourvèdre, Grenache, Cinsault and Syrah. It's a little sugary sweet, with raspberry, orange and vanilla flavors. —S.H.

CALIFORNIA WHITE WINES

CHARDONNAY

93 Petroni 2008 Chardonnay (Napa Valley); \$30. A very nice Chardonnay that offers enough richness to justify the price, yet retains an elegant restraint that won't overpower food. Dry, creamy and brisk, it shows pineapple tart, ripe white peach, buttered toast and vanilla flavors, with a mouthwatering minerality. Production was 800 cases. *Editors' Choice.* —S.H.

92 Etude 2008 Chardonnay (Carneros); \$38. Although there's a lot of oak on this wine, it's not heavy or fat in the excessive California style, because the underlying wine is so crisp and elegant. Call it Chablisian. It shows mineral, Meyer lemon and lime flavors, with brilliant acidity. Really quite a fine Carneros Chardonnay. —S.H.

92 Foxen 2009 Bien Nacido Vineyard Steel Cut Chardonnay (Santa Maria Valley); \$32. Drier and more mineral than Foxen's other Chardonnays, because it is the least oaked. It's vibrant in grilled pineapple, mango, apricot and vanilla spice flavors, brightened by beautiful acidity. Alcohol is quite

high, but the wine never tastes hot or unbalanced. —S.H.

92 Riverbench 2008 Chapel View Chardonnay (Santa Maria Valley); \$30. This valley in Santa Barbara County continues to prove its relevance to California Chardonnay, as proven once again by this dry, crisply elegant and decadently delicious wine. It bursts in the mouth with juicy pineapple, white peach and honeysuckle flavors, generously oaked, but is balanced in acidity and minerals. —S.H.

92 Sonoma-Cutrer 2008 Russian River Ranches Chardonnay (Sonoma Coast); \$23. This is a lovely Chardonnay, a super restaurant wine list bottle. Dry and creamy, it offers pleasantly rich pineapple, lime pie, green apple, exotic spice and buttered toast flavors, accented with crisp, clean acidity. —S.H.

92 Talley 2008 Chardonnay (Arroyo Grande Valley); \$26. Shows the weight, complexity and sheer deliciousness that this bottling almost always displays. Chardonnay fans will love the oaky, creamy flavors of pineapple tart, pear and lemon jam and buttered toast. The winemaker recommends pairing with black cod, and if you have a Chinese restaurant that makes a good version of this honey and soy inspired dish, it will be heaven. *Editors' Choice.* —S.H.

91 Talley 2008 Chardonnay (Edna Valley); \$22. A really nice, elegant Chardonnay at a good price. The wine is dry and lightly oaked, showing rich pineapple, peach, vanilla and buttered toast flavors enhanced with crisp acidity. Only 731 cases were produced of this lovely, food-friendly wine. *Editors' Choice.* —S.H.

90 Foxen 2009 Tinaquaic Vineyard Chardonnay (Santa Maria Valley); \$32. Some will criticize this Chardonnay for being too oaky and sweet, but it sure is delicious. It just brims with pineapple, yellow apricot, crème brûlée, honey and buttered toast flavors that are balanced with crisp acidity. If you like that California style, you'll love this opulent wine. —S.H.

90 Saintsbury 2008 Chardonnay (Carneros); \$18. A very nice Chardonnay for this price. It's barrel fermented and aged on the lees in the classic style, which gives smoky,

creamy notes to the underlying pineapple, green apple, Meyer lemon and orange flavors. Vibrant Carneros acidity makes for a clean finish. Easy to find, with 13,000 cases produced. **Editors' Choice.** —S.H.

90 Taz 2008 Chardonnay (Santa Barbara County); \$18. With this 2008, Taz brings to the table a wonderful Chardonnay at a great price. It's dry and crisply acidic, with bright, perky flavors of oranges, peaches, Meyer lemons and smoky vanilla. Really nice and clean, a lovely wine and a good restaurant by-the-glass selection. Production was 9,000 cases. **Editors' Choice.** —S.H.

89 Ben Hogan 2009 Chardonnay (Paso Robles); \$27. Comes down on the dry, acidic, minerally side of the Chardonnay street. Fans of opulence will find it lacking, but it's so clean and subtle in pineapple tart, tangerine and buttered toast flavors, it recommends itself as one of the more elegant and food-friendly Chards out there. —S.H.

88 Foxen 2009 Bien Nacido Vineyard Block UU Chardonnay (Santa Maria Valley); \$32. Oak sticks out in the form of buttered toast and caramel, while the pineapple, golden mango and honey flavors are very strong. The wine also is marked by notable acidity. Seems like all the parts need a little time to meld into harmony. Give it until mid-2011. —S.H.

88 Inocencio 2009 Chardonnay (Santa Barbara County); \$32. Superrich in vanilla cream, buttered toast, pineapple jam and tangerine sorbet flavors, with a honeyed finish. Is it dry or sweet? Seems both at the same time, accented with bright, Central Coast acidity. Drink now. —S.H.

88 Riverbench 2008 Reserve Chardonnay (Santa Maria Valley); \$32. This is a decadently rich Chardonnay, although it depends for its appeal mainly on oak and ripe fruit, rather than nuance. Explodes with pineapple jam, golden mango, crème brûlée, buttered toast, honey and cinnamon spice flavors. Ready now. —S.H.

87 Firefly Night 2008 Split Rock Vineyard Chardonnay (Sonoma Coast); \$40. A gigantically flavored wine, massive in pineapple, guava and apricot flavors, liberally

accented with 65% new French oak. Although it's dry, it may even have a touch of botrytis, to judge from the honeyed concentration. Defines a particular style, but it doesn't seem to have a future, so drink up. —S.H.

87 Lake Sonoma 2009 Chardonnay (Russian River Valley); \$17. A nice Chardonnay that shows ripe pineapple, green apple and pear flavors, with added smoky richness from oak, and the finish is dry and crisp. A good price for a wine of this quality. —S.H.

87 Magness 2009 Chardonnay (Napa Valley); \$20. Even people who like lots of buttered toast and smoky vanilla in their Chards might find this one a little over the top. It's a good, rich wine, with lots of bright tropical fruit, but it would score higher if it were just a little less oaky. —S.H.

87 Perbacco Cellars 2008 Chardonnay (Edna Valley); \$28. Here's a rich Chardonnay notable for plenty of fruit, and also for brisk acidity. It's creamy smooth, with pineapple, Meyer lemon and lime flavors that are almost sweet in the finish, but pull back in favor of minerality. —S.H.

86 Gainey 2008 Chardonnay (Sta. Rita Hills); \$22. A good wine, comprised of fruit from vineyards scattered across Santa Barbara County. It's bone dry and crisp in acidity, and also pretty oaky. The underlying fruit flavors are of apricots and pears, with perhaps a touch of botrytis. Ready to drink now. —S.H.

86 Kunde 2008 Chardonnay (Sonoma Valley); \$17. Tasted in August, this Chard was tart, almost fizzy in acidity, not unpleasant in itself, but unusual. It gave a bubbly note to the peach, pear and pineapple flavors. Drink now. —S.H.

86 Riverbench 2008 Chardonnay (Santa Maria Valley); \$26. Depends for its appeal largely on oak's vanilla cream and buttered toast flavors, in addition to ripe pineapples and peaches. Made to appeal to the popular style. Could show more nuance and sophistication. —S.H.

85 A By Acacia 2008 Chardonnay (Carneros); \$11. Fruity, with scads of pineapple, green apple, mango and vanilla cream

flavors, brightened with crisp acidity. It's made in the popular style, at a popular price. —S.H.

85 Acacia 2008 Winery Lake Vineyard Chardonnay (Carneros); \$25. Too sweet and jammy to earn a higher score. Although the acidity is nice and bright, the wine tastes almost cloying in pie-filling pineapples, apricots, mangoes and honey. Needs to be drier, firmer, more nuanced. —S.H.

85 Jordan 2008 Chardonnay (Russian River Valley); \$29. Thin and acidic, with just the barest suggestion of grapefruit juice. Maybe some pineapples. Earns an extra point or two for dryness and elegance, but really lacks richness. —S.H.

85 Terlato 2008 Chardonnay (Russian River Valley); \$28. Lots of forward fruit in this Chard that's made in the popular style. Brims with pineapple jam, pear, buttered popcorn and caramel flavors, in a buttercream texture. —S.H.

84 Bluenose 2009 Chardonnay (Sonoma County); \$17. Tastes thin and metallic, with minerally lemon and lime citrus flavors. Partial barrel fermentation adds some creamy richness, but this is still a fairly lean Chardonnay. —S.H.

84 Château Julien 2009 Chardonnay (Monterey County); \$12. This is a good, simple, everyday Chardonnay. It has crisp acidity and is dry, and the apricot, orange and pineapple flavors are a little sweet. —S.H.

84 Fernwood 2008 Vanumanutagi Vineyard Chardonnay (Santa Cruz Mountains); \$32. Ripe tropical fruit and oak dominate this overly sweet Chardonnay. It's very rich in pineapple tart, golden mango, buttered toast and crème brûlée flavors, but lacks dry balance. Tastes like there's a lot of white sugar in there. —S.H.

84 Fleming Jenkins 2009 Chardonnay (Santa Lucia Highlands); \$30. Made in the modern style of extreme ripeness, malolactic fermentation and French oak. Shows strong, almost overpowering flavors of tropical fruits, buttered popcorn and vanilla cream that are almost as sweet as a dessert wine. Needs far greater control for this price. —S.H.

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84 Healdsburg Ranches 2009 Appellation Series Chardonnay (Russian River Valley); \$15. Oaky-sweet and simple, with jammy pineapple, tropical fruit and honey flavors. The best thing is brisk acidity and a clean finish. —S.H.

84 Jekel 2009 Chardonnay (Arroyo Seco); \$13. Simple and clean, with fruit juice flavors of peaches, pineapples, apples and apricots. A tiny bit of oak adds the usual creamy vanilla notes. —S.H.

84 Starmont 2008 Chardonnay (Napa Valley); \$20. Too sweet and oaky, with sugary vanilla and pineapple jam flavors. Could be a Starbucks drink. Saved a bit by crisp acidity. —S.H.

84 Toad Hollow 2009 Unoaked Chardonnay (Mendocino County); \$13. Shows natural Chardonnay flavors of citrus, pear and apricot, uninfluenced by oak, with citrusy acidity. Not much else going on, but it's dry, and the price isn't bad. —S.H.

83 Edna Valley Vineyard 2008 Paragon Chardonnay (San Luis Obispo County); \$12. Simple and sugary sweet, with peach, pineapple and mango flavors that taste like a supermarket fruit juice. It's okay for an everyday Chard. —S.H.

83 Red Rover 2007 Chardonnay (Sierra Foothills); \$10. Pretty good, although it's drying out. The pineapple and pear flavors are disappearing, replaced by herbs and vegetables. Drink quickly. —S.H.

83 Sterling 2008 Vintner's Collection Chardonnay (Central Coast); \$10. Simple and sweet, like a mango, pineapple and peach fruit juice blend. Not much going on, but will appeal to lots of Chard lovers at this price. Production was half a million cases. —S.H.

82 Chalone 2008 Chardonnay (Monterey County); \$11. A simple Chardonnay that tastes like a pineapple, peach and mango fruit juice blend. It's sugary sweet. —S.H.

82 Chime 2009 Chardonnay (Napa County); \$14. A little simple and soft, but okay for your Chardonnay fix. Shows dry, creamy pineapple and apricot flavors. —S.H.

82 Fetzer 2009 Chardonnay (California); \$9. Made in the popular style, with sweetened vanilla cream and orange butterscotch flavors. —S.H.

82 Glass Mountain 2008 Chardonnay (California); \$7. Thin and watery. Not much citrus fruit left, and it's fading fast. On the plus side, the wine is dry, crisp and clean. —S.H.

82 Jade Mountain 2008 Chardonnay (Monterey-San Luis Obispo-Santa Barbara); \$12. Simple, with jammy pineapple, mango and vanilla cream flavors that finish sugary sweet. —S.H.

82 Wily Jack 2008 Chardonnay (California); \$8. Sugary sweet and simple, with fruit juice flavors of pineapples, mangoes, oranges and peaches. Gets the basic Chardonnay job done. —S.H.

81 Night Harvest by R.H. Phillips NV Chardonnay (California); \$7. Sugary sweet, soft and simple, like apricot and peach juice. —S.H.

SAUVIGNON BLANC

91 Chateau St. Jean 2009 Fumé Blanc (Sonoma County); \$14. Most of this Sauvignon Blanc was tank fermented, but a portion received oak. That gives a welcome layer of smoky richness and vanilla to the beautiful, underlying Meyer lemon, lime, pear and green apple flavors that are so rich and mouthwateringly tart. A very drinkable, dry white wine. **Best Buy.** —S.H.

91 Chimney Rock 2008 Elevage Blanc (Napa Valley); \$42. A lovely white Bordeaux-style blend of Sauvignon Blanc and Sauvignon Gris, rich, opulent and full-bodied. Shows citrus, tropical fruit, pear, white flower, green apple and oak-inspired vanilla flavors that change with every sip, as the wine warms in the glass. —S.H.

91 Tangent 2009 Paragon Vineyard Sauvignon Blanc (Edna Valley); \$13. Tangent makes the best, most consistent unoaked Sauvignon Blanc in California. The 2009 is another classic, offering brilliantly clean, crisp flavors of citrus fruits, green apples and gooseberries. Just beautiful. **Best Buy.** —S.H.

89 Foxen 2009 7200 Vogelzang Vineyard Sauvignon Blanc (Happy Canyon of Santa Barbara); \$25. Very dry and very crisp, with lime, lemongrass and mineral flavors. Considerable new French oak brings creamier notes, while 15% Viognier in the blend adds an exotic tang. It impresses for dry, zesty elegance. An interesting wine, and one to watch in future vintages. —S.H.

88 Ancient Peaks 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Paso Robles); \$12. A lovely Sauvignon Blanc whose crisp acidity cleanses the palate, and whose dry finish leaves it stimulated, not cloyed. Shows subtle, tart lemon and lime flavors, with a mineral tang. A super bargain. **Best Buy.** —S.H.

88 Occasio 2009 Del Arroyo Vineyard Sauvignon Blanc (Livermore Valley); \$18. A really nice wine that shows how well Sauvignon Blanc can grow in Livermore Valley. The wine is completely dry and quite tart in acidity, and the lemon, lime, tropical fruit and grassy flavors are enriched with notes of vanilla and buttered toast. **Editors' Choice.** —S.H.

88 Paradise Ridge 2009 Stetson Greene Vineyard Sauvignon Blanc (Dry Creek Valley); \$20. A very nice Sauvignon Blanc that shows the grassy, herbaceous edge that Dry Creek brings to so many wines. But that doesn't mean it's thin. On the contrary, it offers a rich mouth burst of citrus and tropical fruits, figs and green melons, with a touch of tart gooseberry. The finish is a little sweet in honey. —S.H.

87 Alpha Omega 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Napa Valley); \$34. Here's a nice, clean, elegantly structured 100% Sauvignon Blanc. It has flavors of oranges, grapefruits and peaches. Although there's no new oak on it, the notes of sweet vanilla and buttered toast are strong. —S.H.

87 Bonterra 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Mendocino-Lake); \$14. There's no oak in this dry, crisp, clean white wine. It shows the tangy citrus, green grass, vanilla and spice flavors you want in a nice Sauvignon Blanc, with just a touch of gooseberry. Good cocktail wine at a fair price, and easy to find, with 51,500 cases produced. —S.H.

87 Farrier 2008 Hay Hook Sauvignon Blanc-Sémillon (Alexander Valley); \$18. Mainly Sauvignon Blanc, with 18% Sémillon, this is a very fruity young wine. It brims with Meyer lemon, pineapple, pear, peach, apricot and lime flavors, but is rescued from being a fruit bomb by crisp acidity and a nice minerality. There's just a touch of sweet oak for richness. —S.H.

87 Kunde 2009 Magnolia Lane Sauvignon Blanc (Sonoma Valley); \$15. This bottling by fine producer Kunde always shows a grassy, hay-like note to the citrus fruit flavors, so if that's your style, you'll like it. The wine itself is only lightly oaked, and feels crisp and clean in the mouth, as well as dry. The low alcohol is a pleasure. —S.H.

87 Stevenot 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (California); \$15. A really nice Sauvignon Blanc, so easy to drink for its dryness, tart crispness and minerality. It feels clean and palate-stimulating, and offers enough citrus, honeysuckle and vanilla flavors to satisfy. —S.H.

86 Honig 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Napa Valley); \$16. Tastes just a little sweet in citrus and tropical fruit flavors, but the acidity is nice, almost tingly, and the finish is clean. Fine as a cocktail sipper and with spicy Asian noodles with chicken or prawns. —S.H.

86 White Cottage Ranch 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Napa Valley); \$24. This clean, zesty Sauvignon Blanc has plenty of attractive white peach, green apple, citrus and vanilla flavors. It's a little on the sweet fruit juice side of the spectrum, but sure is tasty. —S.H.

85 Rutherford Hill 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Napa Valley); \$18. Here's a good Sauvignon Blanc that will go well with a wide range of foods. Clean, crisp and a little sweet, it has pleasant pineapple, lemon, lime and vanilla flavors. —S.H.

85 Windsor Sonoma 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Russian River Valley); \$15. A little one-dimensional, but for an everyday sipper, it's pretty good for the price. Shows slightly sweet, juicy pineapple, peach, kiwi fruit and Asian pear flavors. —S.H.

84 St. Clement 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Napa Valley); \$16. Very dry, tart in

acidity and a little thin in flavor, with modest citrus, grass and gooseberry flavors. Not showing much, but it's super clean and zesty, a nice cocktail sipper. —S.H.

83 Bogle 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (California); \$9. Good citrus, lemongrass and green apple flavors in this wine, but it's rather sugary, with a fruit juice simplicity. Yet the price is right, if you don't mind a slightly sweet white wine. —S.H.

83 Starmont 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Napa Valley); \$18. Barely ripe, with green citrus and feline spray aromas and flavors. On the plus side is extreme dryness and crisp acidity. You'll either love or hate this wine. —S.H.

82 Sera Fina 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Sierra Foothills); \$15. This unoaked wine is tart and simple, with sweet and sour flavors of oranges and pineapples, like fruit juice with alcohol. —S.H.

PINOT GRIS/GRIGIO

88 Delicato 2009 Pinot Grigio (California); \$7. Made in an appealingly dry, tartly crisp style, this is a fine cocktail sipper to drink with appetizers. It impresses for its rich citrus fruit, lemongrass, mineral and papaya flavors, and as dry as they are, the finish is honeyed. Production was 21,000 cases. **Best Buy.** —S.H.

86 Occasio 2009 Del Arroyo Vineyard Pinot Gris (Livermore Valley); \$16. Try this superrich wine as a twist on Chardonnay. It's full bodied and creamy, with intricate flavors of tropical fruits, limes, oranges, white chocolate, vanilla and cinnamon spice. Straddles the border between dry and off-dry. —S.H.

82 Château Julien 2009 Pinot Grigio (California); \$12. Simple and clean, with sweet and sour orange and pineapple flavors. An inexpensive everyday wine to have by the glass with Chinese food. —S.H.

RIESLING

89 Koehler 2009 Dry Riesling (Santa Ynez Valley); \$18. Don't confuse this with the winery's regular Riesling, which is off-dry. This is their dry bottling, and it's a superior

wine. Shows vital, crisp acidity that makes the mouth water, then follows up with rich citrus, green apple, Asian pear and peppery spice flavors that are tantalizing and complex. One of the more compelling dry Rieslings out there, but the 100-case production will make it hard to find. **Editors' Choice.** —S.H.

85 Jekel 2009 Riesling (Monterey); \$12. Made in an off-dry style, this Riesling has honeyed flavors of a fruit juice blend of oranges, peaches and apples. It's simple, but crisp acidity contributes vital balance. —S.H.

84 Dashe Cellars 2009 McFadden Farm Riesling (Potter Valley); \$20. Tastes off-dry, with a honeyed sweetness to the ripe peach and green apple fruit. Crisp acidity provides needed balance. If you like your Rieslings slightly sweet, it's for you. —S.H.

VIIGNIER

92 Jorian Hill 2008 Viognier (Santa Ynez Valley); \$30. One of the driest Viogniers in California, and also one of the most elegant. Doesn't explode with exotic richness the way some Viogniers do, but it's a very fine white wine, noble and mineral, with nuances of tropical and citrus fruits. Really opens up a whole new direction for Viognier. —S.H.

92 Tangent 2009 Paragon Vineyard Viognier (Edna Valley); \$17. Almost all of California's best Viogniers are oaked, but not this one. As with Tangent's previous bottlings, it just shows that this particular wine doesn't need wood to be opulent and completely satisfying. With brisk, clean acidity, it displays complex citrus, white peach, green apple, wildflower and mineral flavors. What a wonderful wine, and a worthy followup to the sensational 2008. **Editors' Choice.** —S.H.

88 Kunde 2008 Viognier (Sonoma Valley); \$15. Shows the exotic fruitiness of Viognier, with a blast of tangerines, pineapples, Meyer lemons, limes and green apples, with flowery honeysuckle and jasmine notes. The wine shows subtle oak notes, but is mainly notable for its forward flavors, elegant dryness and crisply bright acidity. **Editors' Choice.** —S.H.

BUYING GUIDE

86 Smoking Loon 2008 Viognier (California); \$8. Refreshingly crisp in acidity, with a clean mouthfeel and pleasantly rich peach, honeysuckle and vanilla flavors. There's even a diesel-like petrol note, like Riesling. Great value in a stylish white wine. **Best Buy.** —S.H.

85 Clautiere 2009 Estate Viognier (Paso Robles); \$18. Shows classically exotic, rich Viognier flavors ranging from ripe citrus fruits through peaches and pears to tropical papayas, wildflowers and spices. The trick is to tame this explosion with dryness and structure. Clautiere's '09 partially succeeds, but lacks acidity, and finishes sugary sweet, which makes it cloying. —S.H.

84 Silver 2007 Viognier (Santa Barbara County); \$25. Made with some Grenache Blanc, this is a rather sweet, oaky wine with jammy pineapple, apricot and buttered popcorn flavors. —S.H.

83 Curtis 2009 Viognier (Santa Barbara County); \$22. Tastes like a sugary peach, pear, mango and orange juice fruit drink you buy at the supermarket. Make it drier, and it would be a terrific Viognier. —S.H.

OTHER WHITE WINES

93 Foxen 2009 Ernesto Wickenden Vineyard Old Vines Chenin Blanc (Santa Maria Valley); \$22. For years, Foxen has been producing one of the best Chenin Blancs in California, and with this 2009, they have outdone themselves. It's so rich in orange, honeydew and pineapple flavors, it might almost be Chardonnay, except it's drier and more mineral, and there's a wonderful note of dried herbs. Although production was only 575 cases, this wine is worth a special search, especially for sommeliers. —S.H.

91 Tangent 2009 Paragon Vineyard Grenache Blanc (Edna Valley); \$17. Made with no oak, this pretty wine stars fresh fruit and clean acidity. With orange, honeysuckle, melon, mineral and vanilla flavors, it has a mouthfeel midway between a crisp Sauvignon Blanc and a creamy Chardonnay. Production was low, only 559 cases, but worth a search. **Editors' Choice.** —S.H.

90 Birichino 2009 Malvasia Bianca (Monterey); \$15. Malvasia is an aromatic variety, like Riesling or Muscat. This wine is bone dry and brims with mouth-cleansing acidity. Flavorwise, it's all oranges and tangerines, with hints of honeysuckle and white pepper. There's something tangy and layered that makes it terrifically interesting. Try as a refreshing alternative to tart wines, like Sauvignon Blanc or Pinot Grigio. **Editors' Choice.** —S.H.

89 Tercero 2009 The Outlier Gewürztraminer (Santa Barbara County); \$20. A lovely, fragrant wine that shows the spices and exotic floral and tropical fruit notes of this variety. Crisp in acidity, it finishes just a little off-dry. **Editors' Choice.** —S.H.

87 Farrier 2008 Andiron Sémillon-Sauvignon Blanc (Alexander Valley); \$20. Made from 70% Sémillon and 30% Sauvignon Blanc, this softly appealing wine has rich flavors of mangoes and guavas, with a cashew nut butteriness. It's smooth in the mouth, and a little honey sweet in the finish. A nice cocktail sipper. —S.H.

87 Foursight 2009 Gewürztraminer (Anderson Valley); \$20. This is a brisk, dry and zesty Gewürztraminer that shows how well the variety performs in Mendocino's Anderson Valley. It shows the super-spiciness of Gewürz, with tropical fruit and honeysuckle flavors balanced with crisp acidity. —S.H.

87 Tercero 2009 Camp 4 Grenache Blanc (Santa Ynez Valley); \$20. Good acidity on this clean, vibrant wine, with interesting pineapple, orange, pear and honeysuckle flavors. If you like your wines a little sweet, try it as an interesting alternative to Sauvignon Blanc or Pinot Gris. —S.H.

87 Valley of the Moon 2009 Pinot Blanc (Sonoma County); \$16. Feels like Chardonnay, with full-bodied vanilla cream, pineapple and buttered toast flavors, but veers in its own direction with a strong note of tangerines. Delicious now with seared scallops. —S.H.

86 Curtis 2009 Heritage Blanc (Santa Barbara County); \$18. This is a Rhône-style blend of Viognier, Roussanne and Marsanne. It's fruity in pineapple, peach, apple, mango and Meyer lemon flavors, with a honeysuckle richness, and finishes dry and crisp. A nice

wine for drinking now with smoked meats, especially ham. —S.H.

84 Long Gamma 2009 White (Sonoma County); \$10. If this blend of Sauvignon Blanc, Viognier and Gewürztraminer were drier, it would earn a much higher score. It's clean and crisp in acidity, and very rich in tropical fruit, flower and spice flavors. But it's just too sweet in the finish, almost like a dessert wine. —S.H.

CALIFORNIA SPARKLING WINE

BRUT

94 Schramsberg 2003 J. Schram (North Coast); \$100. A beautiful, rich, elegant, fancy sparkling wine. Feels so fine in the mouth, all silk and satin, with deep, dry raspberry, strawberry, vanilla, toast, yeasty lees, brioche and honey flavors. Superb, but young. Needs time. Give it until 2011, if you can keep your hands off, and should develop until 2015, if not longer. **Cellar Selection.** —S.H.

94 Schramsberg 2007 Blanc de Noirs Brut (North Coast); \$38. Mainly Pinot Noir, with some Chardonnay for brightness and citrusy zest, this brilliantly clean wine has an incredibly fierce mousse. It seems to boil in the glass, and the followup mouthfeel is as creamy and refined as any California sparkler in memory. The Pinot asserts itself in delicate touches of raspberries and strawberries. Delicious and compelling now. Try with sushi. **Editors' Choice.** —S.H.

90 Scharffenberger NV Brut (Mendocino County); \$19. Great price for a brut this classically structured. Made from Pinot Noir and Chardonnay, it's dry and crisp, with a fine mousse that gives it a creamy smooth mouthfeel. The pineapple, raspberry and vanilla flavors are delicious. **Editors' Choice.** —S.H.

88 Roederer Estate NV Brut (Anderson Valley); \$23. Dry and elegant, in the Roederer style, with crisp acidity brightening lime, pink grapefruit and brioche flavors that have richer notes of strawberries and honey. The bubbles are a little rough, but it sure is a nice bubbly to drink now. —S.H.

88 Schramsberg 2007 Blanc de Blancs (North Coast); \$36. Appealing flavors in this dry, tart bubbly. Flatters with vanilla bean, lemon zest, tangerine and toast flavors, with a nice edge of yeast. The bubbles could be a little finer, though, as the wine is a little rough in the mouth. —S.H.

87 Korbel NV Blanc de Noirs (California); \$12. Made from all red grapes, including Pinot Noir, Gamay, Sangiovese and Zinfandel, this is an elegant, delicious sipper that has more elegance than you might expect at this price. It's dryish and crisply clean, with subtle strawberry, raspberry and yeasty flavors. **Best Buy.** —S.H.

86 Korbel NV Brut (California); \$12. Crisp and clean, this is a very nice sparkling wine for everyday purposes at an everyday price. It's just a little sweet, with vanilla cream, peach sorbet and citrus fruit vibrancy. Pinot Noir and Chardonnay are among the constituent grapes, along with Chenin Blanc and French Colombard. —S.H.

85 Korbel 2008 Brut Made with Organically Grown Grapes (California); \$16. Tastes a little sweet for a true brut, with sugary flavors of strawberries, raspberries and vanilla, and the finish is soft. The blend is French Colombard, Chardonnay and Sangiovese. —S.H.

84 Mirabelle NV Brut (North Coast); \$23. A little sweet and rough around the edges, with the flavors of raspberry and cherry brioche. The blend is 60% Chardonnay and 40% Pinot Noir, and this is Schramsberg's second label. —S.H.

BRUT ROSÉ

94 Schramsberg 2007 Brut Rosé (North Coast); \$41. With a pretty pink-salmon color, this Pinot Noir-based blush is rich and full-bodied. It has considerable weight for a bubbly, but the acidity and freshness and yeasty tang lift it up to Champagne elegance. Impossible not to fall in love with this raspberry-scented beauty, but why wouldn't you want to? —S.H.

90 Roederer Estate NV Brut Rosé (Anderson Valley); \$27. A beautiful

rosé bubbly, from the copper-salmon color to the final finish. Made from Pinot Noir and Chardonnay, it's dry and refined, with complex orange, raspberry, vanilla cream, mineral and brioche flavors. Gains extra points for the smoothness of its bubbles. —S.H.

90 Mirabelle NV Brut Rosé (North Coast); \$27. A beautiful rosé sparkling wine, one that shows loads of finesse and elegance. But the final word is its deliciousness. Really captivates with subtle raspberry, toast, vanilla and yeasty brioche flavors that finish so crisp and clean. **Editors' Choice.** —S.H.

87 Korbel NV Brut Rosé (California); \$12. A delightful rosé sparkler, rich in raspberry, cherry and toasty, yeasty flavors, with a smooth, creamy mouthfeel and a honey-sweet finish. Made from Pinot Noir, Sangiovese, Gamay and Chenin Blanc, it's a super value at this price. **Best Buy.** —S.H.

87 Scharffenberger NV Brut Rosé (Mendocino County); \$23. Easy to like this crisp, fruity bubbly. A classic blend of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay, it has rich, candied flavors of raspberries, cherries, tangerines, vanilla and cinnamon spice, with the yeasty tang of a fine sparkling wine. —S.H.

OTHER SPARKLING WINES

88 Korbel NV Sweet Rosé (California); \$12. Even if you don't like sweet sparkling wine, it will be hard to turn down another glass of this beauty. It's so clean and delicious, with a raspberry sorbet and vanilla richness. One of the best sweet bubbly out there, at a great price. **Best Buy.** —S.H.

87 Korbel 2008 Riesling (California); \$16. A rare California sparkler made from the Riesling grape, and a pretty good one. It's slightly sweet, with very pretty flavors of oranges, vanilla, buttered toast and creamy lees. Good price for such a fancy sipper. **Editors' Choice.** —S.H.

86 Korbel NV Extra Dry (California); \$12. Not really dry, but actually a little sweet, with a honey-sugar edge to the strawberries, raspberries, limes and vanilla. Feels clean and crisp and fine in the mouth. The blend is

Chenin Blanc, Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and French Colombard. —S.H.

86 Schramsberg 2006 Crémant Demi-Sec (North Coast); \$38. Made in an off-dry manner, with residual sugar of 3.5%, this blend of the Flora grape and Chardonnay is rich and fruity. It has flavors of golden mango, tangerine tart, vanilla cookie and honey almond granola. —S.H.

85 Korbel 2007 Natural (Russian River Valley); \$16. Feels rough in the mouth, because the bubbles are big and scoury, not small and fine. But the wine is nicely dry and very clean, with pleasant orange and lime flavors. —S.H.

84 Korbel NV Chardonnay (California); \$12. 100% Chardonnay in this sparkler, and it shows in the fresh peach and Meyer lemon flavors. The wine is a little softer in acidity than Korbel's other bubbly, and also a little sweet, which makes it somewhat cloying. —S.H.

WASHINGTON RED WINES

CABERNET & BLENDS

95 Doubleback 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Walla Walla); \$82. This eagerly anticipated Drew Bledsoe/Chris Figgins collaboration is a serious effort, dusty, dense, and dark. To begin are whiffs of cinnamon, smoke, cured meat and bacon; then come tight, dry, stone-soaked flavors of cassis and sweet black fruits. Floral highlights elevate the nose, and lead into a finish with delicious accents of toasted nuts, almond paste, and chalk. A dazzling debut. **Editors' Choice.** —P.G.

94 Dumas Station 2006 Minnick Hills Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon (Walla Walla); \$60. Rich, concentrated, and loaded with smoky, dark, spicy fruit flavors, this is a full-on Bordeaux blend, with Cabernet Franc, Merlot and Petit Verdot. There's plenty of barrel influence, from 70% new French oak, but it's welcome, and appropriate, perfectly matched to the power of the fruit. An underlayer of woody earth and mushroom adds further complexity. **Cellar Selection.** —P.G.

94 Stevens 2007 XY Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon (Yakima Valley); \$42. Top lots from Sheridan, Dineen and Meek vineyard grapes go into this reserve. This is always the most thick and dense of the Stevens wines, and the tannins, though very well managed, are chewy and substantial. They dominate this young wine, but the stacked and subtle layers of red and black fruits, leaf and forest floor materials, moist earth and ashes keep the flavors complex and interesting. This wine absolutely must be decanted, and can be cellared almost indefinitely. **Cellar Selection.** —P.G.

93 Corliss Estates 2005 Cabernet Sauvignon (Columbia Valley); \$75. More than the tight and tannic 2005 Corliss Red, this Cabernet Sauvignon is immediately fragrant and open, with a mix of sweet fruit and sweet oak. Black cherry, cassis, subtle notes of lavender, and a foundation of wet stone are all nicely balanced and surprisingly elegant, given the relatively high (15.1%) alcohol. This wine seems now to be entering its prime time—it benefits from decanting, and will cellar well, but should probably be consumed within the next 2–8 years. —P.G.

93 L'Ecole No. 41 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Walla Walla); \$40. This is 100% Cabernet Sauvignon from an all-star collection of Walla Walla vineyards. It shows excellent structure and depth, with plenty of herbal character. The black fruits are abundant, spicy and sharp; this is a young wine from a great vintage than needs more bottle age. The layering, though still tight and compact, suggests that with cellaring this will evolve into Bordeaux-like complexity, with a mix of herb, mineral, leaf and berry flavors. The barrel flavors (40% new) are subtle and elegant. **Cellar Selection.** —P.G.

92 Corliss Estates 2005 Red Wine (Columbia Valley); \$65. Though it is five years old and just being released, this thick, tannic and rich Bordeaux blend still requires decanting, cellaring, and/or extensive breathing time. A full day after first being tasted, it came together for me; the initial, aggressively herbal character is equally matched to ripe black cherry fruit and massive tannins. The nose suggests sweet cherry, but the palate leans more to the herbal side, with flavors of earth, stem and leaf, and there is a green tea residual flavor that infuses the finish. A wine to cellar and to savor with a fine steak. **Cellar Selection.** —P.G.

92 L'Ecole No. 41 2007 Seven Hills Vineyard Estate Perigee (Walla Walla); \$50. Tart and leafy, this is still resolving into a fully integrated wine. It already shows balance and depth, with a mix of plum, fig, black cherry and cassis fruit, a streak of sweet chocolate and hints of baking spice. From a great vintage, this has the balance and stuffing to age, but if you can't keep your hands off it, decant. —P.G.

92 Stevens 2007 424 Red Blend (Yakima Valley); \$33. Immediately appealing, this blend of 39% Cab Franc, 36% Cabernet Sauvignon, 16% Merlot, and 9% Petit Verdot really expands the midpalate, without sacrificing the overall muscularity and density that are the hallmarks of Stevens reds. The best 424 to date, this brings Petit Verdot into the blend for the first time, expanding the floral aromatics and deepening the tannins. Fruits are a complex mix of black cherry, blackberry and raisin, with licorice streaking into the finish. —P.G.

91 Cadaretta 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Columbia Valley); \$40. Cadaretta's largest production red is drinking beautifully in this exceptional vintage. It seems to be moving into midlife softness, with a well-integrated blend of plums, cassis and black cherries, highlighted with clove and coffee. Complex and detailed, its tannins are grainy and dark, adding heft and gravitas to the fruit. —P.G.

91 Fidelitas 2007 Ciel du Cheval Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Red Mountain); \$55. From a vineyard sited near the winery, this is the most supple, balanced and evenly detailed of the 2007 red wines from Fidelitas. The lightly muscled, compact fruit flavors bring black cherry, cassis, and plum together, with a strong minerality providing subtext. A suggestion of smoke suffuses the finish. —P.G.

91 L'Ecole No. 41 2007 Pepper Bridge Vineyard Apogee (Walla Walla); \$50. First to arrive, straight to your awaiting nose, are complex aromatics, with a mix of floral and spicy highlights that surround the black and purple fruits with exotic nuances. The fruit is high perfect—ripe, round, forward and loaded with plummy, sweet berries. It gathers strength in the core, holds, and then expands into a finish dusted with cocoa and coffee. —P.G.

91 Tranche 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon (Columbia Valley); \$35. From a

hard-edged vintage, this Bordeaux blend is just beginning to open up, but has a firm structure and a steely spine. The aromas are strongly varietal, with a mix of fresh herbs and sharp tannins. The fruit is subtle, black cherry and cassis, threaded with smoke. **Cellar Selection.** —P.G.

90 Cadaretta 2006 Springboard (Columbia Valley); \$50. A limited-production Bordeaux blend, this is a vineyard/barrel selection by now-departed Cadaretta winemaker Virginie Bourgue. It's silky and deep, with penetrating black fruits and toasted, roasted coffee barrel flavors. Seductive and smooth, this is an elegant wine that warrants cellaring. —P.G.

90 Davenport Cellars 2007 Continuity Red Wine (Columbia Valley); \$24. Smooth, seductive, toasty and rich on the nose, this blend of all five Bordeaux varieties is not a big wine, but drinking extremely well at the moment, with a precise balance of fruit, earth and barrel that sets up seductively in the mouth, and stays there. Excellent length and fullness. —P.G.

90 Fidelitas 2007 Red Mountain Vineyard Red Wine (Red Mountain); \$50. This single-vineyard blend is drinking very well. There is an unusual minty spice underlying the cassis and cherry fruit, and it provides a nice line for the flavors as they weave across the palate. This wine is among the best balanced of the 2007 reds from Fidelitas, and shows some well-managed herbs and baking spice flavors along with soft, light tannins. —P.G.

90 Nefarious Cellars 2008 Riverbend Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Wahluke Slope); \$30. A fine companion to the winery's Cabernet Franc, also sourced from this exceptional vineyard, this pure Cabernet Sauvignon has a lighter mouthfeel, with plum and Bing cherry fruit front and center. Tannins are polished and smooth, and the nuances of toast and herb show up gently in the finish. —P.G.

89 Davenport Cellars 2007 R.H.D. Red Wine (Columbia Valley); \$24. This is three fifths Merlot, with the other four Bordeaux grapes filling out the rest. 100% French oak was used, half new, and the near-15% alcohol shows in a bit of burn in the finish. Toasty, smoky, laden with roasted coffee and bitter chocolate notes, this is a wine to pair with a grilled steak. —P.G.

89 Fidelitas 2006 Optu Red Wine (Columbia Valley); \$40. The Optu red is packaged in a supremely heavy, oversized glass bottle, suggesting that this is the winery's prestige blend, as does the name, Latin for "the best." Big, full, rich, ripe, round, fleshy and forward, this is a no-wait red that should be consumed as soon as possible. —P.G.

89 L'Ecole No. 41 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Columbia Valley); \$30. The fruit for this Columbia Valley Cabernet Sauvignon is sourced from a dozen different vineyards, blended into a firm, purely varietal example of Washington Cabernet Sauvignon. The rich aromatics of black fruits, baking spices, dust, and cocoa powder roll into a full-flavored midpalate, enhanced with a light floral component. —P.G.

88 Fidelitas 2007 Champoux Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Horse Heaven Hills); \$50. Smooth, ripe, and scented with a mix of raisins, cherry compote and baking spices, this forward, fruity Cabernet Sauvignon reaches almost 15% alcohol. If this level of fruit ripeness is your preference, this is the wine to buy. The finishing tannins are chewy and the wine shows noticeable alcoholic burn. —P.G.

88 Glencorrie 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Walla Walla); \$40. Dusty scents conjure up cocoa powder, red and black fruits, and dried herbs. Forward and broadly fruity, it's immediately appealing and ready to drink. There's a sprinkling of pepper, along with a subtle earthiness. —P.G.

88 Milbrandt 2007 The Estates Cabernet Sauvignon (Wahluke Slope); \$25. This wine has muscle and grip; it's a densely layered Cabernet, based upon cassis and loam, with firm, muscular tannins. At the moment it does not extend its power into the finish, but rather it seems to stop short. Try giving it extra breathing time. —P.G.

87 Glencorrie 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Columbia Valley); \$35. This 100% Cabernet Sauvignon was aged in a 50/50 mix of French and American oak. It is still quite astringent, tannic, and herbal, needing more bottle age to meld the somewhat harsh barrel flavors. The tart fruit flavors combine rhubarb and raspberries, black cherry and cassis. —P.G.

87 Glencorrie 2007 Cuvee Marquis (Columbia Valley); \$45. A forward, well-constructed wine with a nice balance of fruit, acid and tannin. Ripe and scented with fresh herbs and dried leaves, this is a pleasant red for near-term drinking enjoyment. —P.G.

87 Market Vineyards 2007 Arbitrage Cabernet Sauvignon (Columbia Valley); \$49. Soft and approachable, this seems more like a generic red than a pure Cabernet Sauvignon. It's quite ripe, ready to drink, and certainly smooth. What is not there is any particular varietal character or sense of place. This is a medium-bodied red that could be from anywhere. —P.G.

85 Market Vineyards 2007 Basis Points Meritage Red (Columbia Valley); \$39. Like the other reds from this new project, this is a pleasant, generic red wine. No blend is indicated; this has a very soft, almost artificially manipulated mouthfeel. It could be a \$10 blend from anywhere. Perfectly drinkable, with a bit of heat in the finish. —P.G.

83 Cave B 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon (Columbia Valley); \$25. Thin, tannic, and chewy, this includes 21% Merlot in the blend and spent 22 months in barrel. A hard, unyielding wine, with marginal ripeness. —P.G.

MERLOT

93 Stevens 2008 Merlot (Yakima Valley); \$28. As in past vintages, this is half DuBrul and half Meek vineyard fruit. It's a far cry from what most consumers would think of as Merlot—this is a stiff, tannic, muscular wine, with a deep earthiness that speaks of rich loam and ancient rock. It strikes me as more typical of Malbec. The tannins are firm and dense, and the fruits are black as coal and laced with tar and smoke. **Cellar Selection.** —P.G.

91 Dumas Station 2007 Merlot (Walla Walla); \$26. This Right Bank-styled blend includes 19% Cabernet Franc and 5% Petit Verdot. Despite its high (15.3%) alcohol, it's a meaty, complex wine that drinks much lighter. The berry/cherry fruit flavors are woven into a tapestry of earth, herb and spice, smooth and detailed, and the wine has a mouth-pleasing seamless quality that invites another sip, and another. —P.G.

91 L'Ecole No. 41 2007 Merlot (Columbia Valley); \$28. This is a beautiful wine from the nose on out. Complex and aromatic, it has Italian-style tobacco scents, fresh acidity, leafy highlights, and undertones of tar, licorice and clove, all wrapped around tart, pie cherry fruit. —P.G.

89 Fidelitas 2007 Red Mountain Vineyard Merlot (Columbia Valley); \$45. Pure Merlot, from the Red Mountain vineyard, this displays that AVA's stiff, hard-edged tannins, keeping the fruit pinned down into a compact core. Cassis and black cherry, iron filings and some tar are all carefully balanced. There's plenty of muscle for further aging, and a hint of heat in the finish. —P.G.

88 Fidelitas 2007 Champoux Vineyard Merlot (Horse Heaven Hills); \$50. Champoux is one of Washington's most revered vineyards, known especially for the rich, black cherry fruit on display here. However, this wine seems to be aging rather quickly, the flavors turning soft and leafy in the midpalate, and the wine's rim hinting at the beginning tones of brick. It's drinking nicely, and should be consumed near term for best enjoyment. —P.G.

88 Glencorrie 2007 Stillwater Creek Merlot (Columbia Valley); \$40. Smooth, round and forward, this appealing Merlot offers black cherry and fig fruits, a coating of dark chocolate, and a hint of fragrant mint. It spent 21 months in barrel, 40% new French oak. —P.G.

88 Market Vineyards 2007 Benchmark Merlot (Columbia Valley); \$35. Smooth and rich, this is a nice mix of ripe purple fruits and expensive new oak. It's soft and seamless, ready to drink right now, with all the vanilla and butterscotch flavors that lovers of big red wines look for. It fades in the finish, leaving a slightly bitter, medicinal aftertaste. —P.G.

88 Milbrandt 2007 The Estates Merlot (Wahluke Slope); \$25. Tight and nicely constructed, this is not afraid to show its herbal side. Tannins are earthy and firm, the fruit tight and focused, and the wine might benefit from a few more years in the bottle. What's already there is cassis, tar and earth, finishing with a light but balanced fade. —P.G.

87 Fidelitas 2007 Merlot (Columbia Valley); \$25. Fidélitas offers three different Merlots in its lineup, this being the least expensive. It's a fine, everyday bottle, broadly displayed over the core fruit flavors of plum and boysenberry. There are lightly applied highlights of fresh spring herbs, and almost no traces of barrel toast in the finish, just tart and tasty fruit. —P.G.

CABERNET FRANC

92 Nefarious Cellars 2008 Cabernet Franc (Wahluke Slope); \$29. The word inky must have been invented for this pure Cabernet Franc, sourced from the Weinbau vineyard (the label is misprinted). In the world of Cabernet Franc, many are called, and few are chosen. This is one of the chosen. Dense, tightly threaded with smoke, earth, black olive, black cherry, cassis and mocha scents and flavors, this nonetheless drinks smoothly. The tannin management is superb, softening up the hard edges without stripping the wine of flavor. *Editors' Choice.* —P.G.

91 Stevens 2008 Franc Cabernet Franc (Yakima Valley); \$30. The fruit is half Sheridan and half Dineen vineyard. Although stylistically a brother to the Stevens Merlot, this has the varietal earmarks of Cabernet Franc — some green, leafy streaks, more spice and sharpness to the tannins, and a definite herbal component. The fruit is an equal but not dominant partner — blackberry, cassis, and black olive, finished with a whiff of very dark chocolate. —P.G.

83 Cave B 2008 Cabernet Franc (Columbia Valley); \$28. Cabernet Franc often shows more stem and herb than either Merlot or Cabernet Sauvignon, but here there is little else to hang your hat on. Hard, chewy and tannic, it might best be drunk with a grilled steak, so those tough tannins are put to work. —P.G.

MALBEC

90 Stevens 2008 Timley Malbec (Yakima Valley); \$34. Sharply acidic, deep in color, and a bit more fruit forward than the other Stevens reds, this is loaded with sweet plum and delicious cinnamon-infused baking

spices. Young vines are the reason, adding light floral top notes, with powdered sugar and sweet candied grape in the finish. —P.G.

88 Nefarious Cellars 2008 Upland Vineyard Malbec (Snipes Mountain); \$28. This new Malbec is a soft, fruity, extremely dark wine, with scents of raisins and pretty fruit flavors of boysenberries and black cherries, with lighter streaks of coffee and caramel woven through. The balance is excellent, though the wine does not show the depth of flavor that is expressed in its inky dark colors. —P.G.

86 Fidelitas 2007 Malbec (Columbia Valley); \$35. Pure varietal, with ripe fruit hinting at an encroaching prune flavor, this is wrapped in the big flavors of barrel toast, smoke and coffee. Quite consistent with the overall style of winemaker Charlie Hoppes, this is one of those wines that will engender heated discussions between admirers and critics. —P.G.

83 Cave B 2008 Malbec (Columbia Valley); \$32. Light and herbal, this blend of Malbec, Syrah and Merlot fails to evoke much flavor or charm. It's thin and simple. —P.G.

SYRAH

91 Davenport Cellars 2007 Syrah (Columbia Valley); \$20. Sourced about equally from Kiona (on Red Mountain) and Rosebud (in the Wahluke Slope), this deep, dark, well-made Syrah offers exception value. The fruit is plenty ripe, a mix of berries, raisins and plums; there is a generous chocolate note, firm tannins, and the grapes' earthy, lightly funky side displayed as well. It's all beautifully balanced. *Editors' Choice.* —P.G.

90 Alexandria Nicole 2007 Syrah (Columbia Valley); \$25. If you are looking for a right-on, pure and typical example of Washington Syrah, this is a good place to start. The fruit is deep and black, a mix of berries, plums and cassis, threaded with tobacco, earth and iron ore. Everything seems softened and smoothed, making this especially accessible, in part, most likely, due to this supremely balanced vintage. —P.G.

90 L'Ecole No. 41 2008 Seven Hills Vineyard Estate Syrah (Walla

Walla); \$37. Deep and fruity, this hits you with a dense core of black cherry, strawberry preserves and cooked raisins. Interesting details emerge throughout as it runs across the palate: pepper and herb, baking spices and light chocolate. Good balance and length, but drink up soon. —P.G.

90 Milbrandt 2007 The Estates Syrah (Wahluke Slope); \$25. A surefire success in all the Milbrandt vineyard holdings, Syrah shows stuffing and spine here. It's firm, herbal and earthy, with a lightly funky aspect. But the fruit is there in support—black cherries and blackberries—and the hint of toast and mocha in the finish provides exactly the right send-off into the next sip. —P.G.

90 Stevens 2008 BlackTongue Syrah (Yakima Valley); \$30. BlackTongue has some of the same umami-soaked character as the nearby Boushey vineyard Syrahs, with perhaps more earth, smoke, tar and licorice, and a little less funk and composty aromas. A stylistic note—this is a very dry Syrah, deep, compact, layered with black fruit flavors, cassis and very dry tannins. —P.G.

89 Corliss Estates 2005 Syrah (Columbia Valley); \$55. Though it lacks the precision of a single-vineyard Syrah (a grape that meticulously reflects individual terroir), this is balanced, clean and unmistakably varietal. There is a spicy, sharply herbal underpinning and tannins that suggest some stems in the fermentation. The high alcohol does not intrude, and the wine is complete and full. —P.G.

89 L'Ecole No. 41 2007 Syrah (Columbia Valley); \$25. This is a relatively light style of Washington Syrah, elegant and nuanced, with an interesting mix of herbs and barrel spices over tangy raspberry/blueberry fruit. Medium length, it tails out into a soft, gentle finish, with a touch of heat from the alcohol. —P.G.

89 Nefarious Cellars 2008 Rocky Mother Vineyard Estate Syrah (Columbia Valley); \$42. This is Syrah from the far northwest corner of the Columbia Valley, a cool region, whose wines show an underlying minerality. The berry flavors are subtle; this is a mélange of leaf, herb, rock and acid. Still young, the tannins are drying and the wine seems to be entering a dumb phase. Give it plenty of breathing time. —P.G.

88 Nefarious Cellars 2008 Defiance Vineyard Estate Syrah (Lake Chelan); \$27. Consistent with the Lake Chelan winery's lineup of red wines, this young Syrah brings a lot of generous, berry-flavored primary fruits, softened tannins and a deep purple color. The opening cherry and berry fruit, turning a little prune-y and limned by citrusy acids, leads into a tart midpalate with some earth and granite underlying the fruit. —P.G.

87 Hightower 2008 Murray Syrah (Red Mountain); \$20. Big and bold, loaded with red fruits and sharp acidity, the Murray Syrah from Hightower brings a spicy mix of fruit, loam and mineral. There's some heat in it as well. The grapes are estate grown, and the Syrah was cofermented with 5% Viognier. —P.G.

85 Cave B 2008 Syrah (Columbia Valley); \$25. Syrah is often the best red wine from this estate, and that seems to be the case again in 2008. This delivers round cherry fruit flavors, simple and slightly hot (from 14.8% alcohol). It was cofermented with 4% Viognier, and blended with 8% Cabernet Sauvignon. —P.G.

83 Mount Baker 2007 Barrel Select Syrah (Yakima Valley); \$14. This "Barrel Select" Syrah has been ripened to prune-yness, yet remains short, hot and simple. It could be any red grape left to hang late and fermented at (perhaps) high temperatures. —P.G.

OTHER RED WINES

91 Alexandria Nicole 2008 Quarry Butte Destiny Ridge Vineyard Red Wine (Horse Heaven Hills); \$20. Scents of licorice, coffee and tobacco move into concentrated blueberry and cassis fruit flavors that wrap into a tannic, chewy midpalate. The fruit here is outstanding, and the wine delivers excellent, clean, concentrated flavors at this price point. An outstanding value. *Editors' Choice.* —P.G.

91 Milbrandt 2007 Northridge Sentinel Red (Wahluke Slope); \$55. Named for the Sentinel Gap, a nearby landmark, this is the top wine from Milbrandt. Supple and complex, it shows a sensuous mix of fruits, ranging from mixed berries into black cherries, plums and cassis. The barrel notes of coffee and toast are carefully worked, and the tannins polished

and sleek. A wine that may be savored immediately, or cellared for up to 10 years. *Cellar Selection.* —P.G.

91 Rôtie Cellars 2008 Southern Blend Red (Washington); \$35. The percentage of Grenache has been bumped up in Rôtie's second vintage, now at 70%, with the rest an even split between Syrah and Mourvèdre. Soft and spicy scents are laced with a mix of rock and vanilla. This nicely structured yet approachable wine might be mistaken for a Washington take on Priorat. The underlying minerality gives the light, plummy fruit a solid footing, and extends the length considerably. —P.G.

90 Cadaretta 2007 Windthrow (Columbia Valley); \$50. Cadaretta's Windthrow is a limited-release southern Rhône blend of 37% Syrah, 27% Mourvèdre, 18% Cunoise and 18% Grenache. The fruit is just ripe enough, clean and juicy, with a spicy and tart mouthfeel. What's most surprising is the length—the wine seems to gather itself and push on through a full-throttle finish, adding nougat and vanilla custard to the mix. —P.G.

90 Dumas Station 2007 Cow Catcher Red (Walla Walla); \$19. The cow catcher is the front of the train engine guard, and speaks to the railroad theme of this winery. An outstanding "second" wine, this value blend drinks like a much pricier wine. It's ready to go, with broad, softened, mixed red fruits, baking spices, toasty barrel notes and a smooth, gliding, lingering finish. *Editors' Choice.* —P.G.

90 Rôtie Cellars 2008 Northern Blend Red (Washington); \$35. Spicy Syrah, with a clear herbal core, shows blackberry and blueberry fruit, along with lighter suggestions of compost, pepper and anise. Unfined and unfil-tered, the wine remains proportionate and avoids over-the-top ripeness or heft. Best if cellared for another 5–8 years. —P.G.

88 Cadaretta 2007 Highclimber Sangiovese (Columbia Valley); \$50. A one-of-a-kind 100% Sangiovese from Cadaretta, this pure and expressive wine shows concentrated strawberry fruit presented in a balanced style with acids and tannins in perfect proportion. There is no hint of new oak, just a softening from barrel aging, and a lovely presentation of the pretty young fruit. —P.G.

87 Nefarious Cellars 2008 The Spinner (Columbia Valley); \$24. This edition of the Spinner is 50% Merlot, 37% Syrah and 13% Malbec. It's scented with leaf and raisin, streaked with smoke and baking spices, and offers up a medium-bodied midpalate with a mix of black cherry, currants and pomegranate. Fine for near-term drinking. —P.G.

86 Airfield Estates 2008 Dolcetto (Yakima Valley); \$28. A rare Washington Dolcetto, this has the expected tart acidity, along with peppery red fruit. Finished with a screwcap, it needs some extra breathing time, and as it opens it shows some pretty raspberry fruit and just a hint of dark chocolate. —P.G.

86 Airfield Estates 2008 Mustang Red (Yakima Valley); \$25. Roughly half Grenache, the rest a mix of Syrah, Cinsault, Cunoise and Mourvèdre; this southern Rhône-style red has a spicy, juicy vitality that makes it a good quaffer. The grapes are just ripe enough, still showing some rhubarb and sweet tomato flavors, and the tannins are quite soft, though still herbal. —P.G.

86 Nefarious Cellars 2008 Rx-4 Red Wine (Columbia Valley); \$28. No idea what the name means, but the wine is a blend of 35% Mourvèdre, 30% Syrah, 22% Cunoise, and 13% Cinsault—southern Rhône all the way. Soft, fruity and lightened with lemony acids, this is a fine quaffing wine. As it evolves into the finish, a leafier, more herbal and peppery character takes hold. The fruit seems young and quite light. —P.G.

86 Wilridge 2008 End of the Road Vineyard Sangiovese (Red Mountain); \$29. The nose hints at volatility, and the wine opens with a hard, sharp edge to it. But with breathing time, some pretty cherry fruit emerges, along with varietal scents and streaks of fresh-cut tobacco. —P.G.

85 Airfield Estates 2008 Zinfandel (Yakima Valley); \$28. Tart strawberry fruit grabs the palate and doesn't let go; this is a straightforward, light, fruity Zin, with perhaps a whiff of pepper from the addition of 10% Syrah. —P.G.

84 Airfield Estates 2008 Hellcat Red (Yakima Valley); \$25. This is essentially Tempranillo, with small amounts of

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Grenache and Syrah added; it is light and scented with sweet cracker. Fruit flavors favor cherry candy, with a leathery, tackroom undertone. The tannins are leathery and stick to the tongue, dampening the fruit. —P.G.

84 Airfield Estates 2008 Spitfire Red (Yakima Valley); \$25. This is 60% Sangiovese, the rest a mix of Bordeaux grapes. Airfield Estates produces a wide variety of mixed red blends, each centered upon a particular grape. But here, as with the others, the dominant grape's varietal character is subsumed in a wash of mixed reds, and the results tend to seem generic. Pleasant, quaffable, but without varietal distinction. —P.G.

84 Cave B 2008 Tempranillo (Columbia Valley); \$28. It's hard to distinguish much in the way of varietal character here, other than the higher acidity and hints of tobacco leaf. Otherwise, it's a thin, generic red wine. —P.G.

83 Airfield Estates 2008 Bombshell Red (Yakima Valley); \$16. A broadly fruity mélange of red grapes, moderately tart and pleasant enough as a simple pizza and pasta red. At the listed 14.4% alcohol, you might hope for a bit more concentration. —P.G.

82 Mount Baker 2007 Proprietor's Limited Release Petit Verdot (Yakima Valley); \$20. Petit Verdot is not an easy grape; here it turns volatile, the grapes prune, and the finish tannic and short. —P.G.

82 Mount Baker 2008 Proprietor's Limited Release Zinfandel (Red Mountain); \$30. This Zinfandel tastes barely ripe; there is little or no fruit flavor, just a leafy, light, generic wine that quickly disappears from the palate. —P.G.

ROSÉ WINES

84 Patterson Cellars 2009 Rosé (Washington); \$15. This rosé is done by the saignée method, bleeding off excess juice from the fermenting tanks. It's 48% Syrah and 52% Cabernet Franc, yielding a hard-edged yet buttery wine with lightly peppery, watermelon flavors. Not for everyone, but distinctive. —P.G.

83 Martinez & Martinez 2009 Cabernet Blanca Rosé of Cabernet Sauvignon (Horse Heaven Hills); \$15. Like a white Zinfandel, this is a sweet, sugary, raspberry- and strawberry-flavored wine for chilling and sipping. —P.G.

WASHINGTON WHITE WINES

CHARDONNAY

91 L'Ecole No. 41 2009 Chardonnay (Columbia Valley); \$20. This is pure Chardonnay, from cool-climate sites, showing a lean, sculpted spine that both defines and expands the flavors. Exceptionally complex for Washington Chardonnay, with good natural acidity, a mix of peach, apple and pineapple fruit, and a finish that shows tight layering. There is a dense core that should unravel with bottle age; this is that rare Washington Chardonnay that will prosper with cellaring. *Cellar Selection.* —P.G.

91 Tranche 2007 Chardonnay (Columbia Gorge); \$30. This is tight when first opened, with a hard-edged herbal character. Beneath that shell are richer, tropical fruit flavors of ripe banana, yellow apple and a hint of papaya; and with plenty of breathing time the wine softens and opens out. Roughly two thirds of the barrels were new French oak; and that is still being resolved into the fruit. This wine has a good 6–8 years of life ahead of it, but if you are drinking it now, decant it. —P.G.

88 Arbor Crest 2008 Connor Lee Vineyard Chardonnay (Columbia Valley); \$18. Sweet oak and lightly tropical fruit flavors characterize this young, tight, full-bodied Chardonnay. With another year or two in bottle, the fruit should emerge from behind the new oak flavors and enhance the overall balance. In the meanwhile, decanting is a good idea. —P.G.

88 Milbrandt 2009 Evergreen Vineyard Chardonnay (Columbia Valley); \$23. From the Evergreen Vineyard, in the Ancient Lakes region north of the Wahluke Slope, this is surprisingly high-powered, at 13.9% alcohol, with a big smack of oak in the nose. That oak is wrapped around green banana and green apple fruit, with a little vanilla on the side. As

young as it is, it seems likely to knit together and improve over the next year or two. —P.G.

87 Milbrandt 2009 Traditions Chardonnay (Columbia Valley); \$13. Clean, fresh and simple, this does not claim to be “unoaked” but it carries that style in its flavors, a snappy mix of green apple, pineapple and grapefruit. Good everyday drinking. —P.G.

85 Airfield Estates 2009 Unoaked Chardonnay (Yakima Valley); \$12. Juicy fruit gum flavors abound, a mix of citrus rind and candy. It must be chilled and enjoyed for its forward, simple fruit flavors. —P.G.

84 Cave B 2008 Chardonnay (Columbia Valley); \$20. Barrel fermented, with light flavors of peaches and cream, and a watery mouthfeel that does not quite come together. —P.G.

83 Mount Baker 2008 Proprietor's Limited Release Chardonnay (Yakima Valley); \$17. Short and sharp, this “Proprietor's Limited Release” is simply a plain, generic style, with a bitter finish. —P.G.

82 Patterson Cellars 2009 Chardonnay (Columbia Valley); \$21. Barrel fermented, 20% of it new French oak, this is a bright lemon yellow, with scents of wood and toast. There's a slim streak of something else in the aromas that seems not quite right, a little fishy smell. The wine does not come together in the mouth; it's a jumble of round stone fruits, cardboard and a slightly rancid finish. —P.G.

RIESLING

92 Nefarious Cellars 2009 Stone's Throw Vineyard Riesling (Columbia Valley); \$18. This is estate grown, from a Lake Chelan winery in an emerging region. Riesling is clearly a strength, as this has a delicate elegance often missing from the fruit bombs that can be grown in warmer sites. Bone dry, dusty and lightly floral in the nose. The balance of blossom, yellow fruits, juicy acidity and wet rock is impeccable; the wine extends itself gracefully into a lingering finish. *Editors' Choice.* —P.G.

88 Cave B 2009 Riesling (Columbia Valley); \$18. Fruity and full-flavored, this quaffable Riesling brings a full share of

peachy fruit, honeysuckle and English breakfast tea. The residual sugar is just over 1%, and the acids compensate, giving it good balance. —P.G.

88 Milbrandt 2009 Traditions Riesling (Columbia Valley); \$13. At just 12.5% alcohol, this comes across as dry and quite fresh, with vivid grapefruit flesh and acidity. Some mint and lemon flavors sneak in also. The emphasis is clearly on citrus rather than peach or apricot; a fine food wine. **Best Buy.** —P.G.

85 Mount Baker 2009 Proprietor's Limited Release Riesling (Yakima Valley); \$15. Simple and straightforward, this fruity wine offers lemon/lime fruit and moderate acidity. Fine for everyday consumption, best chilled. —P.G.

SÉMILLON

91 L'Ecole No. 41 2008 Fries Vineyard Sémillon (Wahluke Slope); \$20. This pure varietal, single-vineyard, barrel-fermented wine perfectly captures the baseline flavors and qualities of the best Washington Sémillons. Complex and slightly high-toned, it brings ripe stone fruits, a hint of honeyed tea, impressive length and penetration, and a waxy, polished, lingering finish. —P.G.

91 L'Ecole No. 41 2009 Sémillon (Columbia Valley); \$15. Blended with 17% Sauvignon Blanc, this lovely Sémillon is exceptionally fragrant, satiny and rich, with fleshy, ripe fruits and just a hint of toast. A warm streak of caramel enlivens the finish, which lingers gracefully and fills the palate with delicious flavors of apples and spicy pears. **Best Buy.** —P.G.

90 Davenport Cellars 2009 Barrel Fermented Sémillon (Columbia Valley); \$19. Thick, ripe, creamy and luscious, this 15.4% Sémillon carries itself with grace and style. The dense fruit flavors mix peaches, apricots, pears and spicy apples; with a hint of caramel and brown sugar. Though quite dry, it has so much fruit as to seem lightly sweet, and the high alcohol does not take away from the complexity. If it were not fermented dry, this would be a stunning late harvest dessert wine. **Editors' Choice.** —P.G.

90 Fidelitas 2008 Sémillon (Columbia Valley); \$30. A fine example of pure, varietal, Columbia Valley Sémillon, this is like liq-

uid honey, without the sweetness. It's more like the essence of honey flavor, coating the mix of peach, pear and fig fruits. Smooth as silk, supple and soft, it's a lovely effort. —P.G.

86 Cave B 2008 Sémillon (Columbia Valley); \$20. This spent almost a year in mostly neutral oak, and has softened into a wine loaded with lemony, peachy fruit, so thick as to seem almost syrupy in the mouth. Fruit-driven and forward, it is ready to drink and should be chilled for the best flavor. —P.G.

VIIGNIER

92 Stevens 2009 Divio Viognier (Yakima Valley); \$21. Aromatically forward and lush, this greets you with lemon polish, beeswax, Satsuma oranges, and Key lime, backed with barrel-influenced coconut flavors. The flavors meld together in the mouth, holding firm with extra phenolic density through a lip-smacking, luscious and lingering finish **Editors' Choice.** —P.G.

89 Nefarious Cellars 2009 Defiance Vineyard Viognier (Lake Chelan); \$19. There is a lovely balance to this Viognier, and a sense that these cool-climate grapes were not pushed too far. The winemaker, happily, chose to make the wine that the vineyard gave her. Delicate and layered, with paper-thin suggestions of citrus rind, grapefruit and white peach. Still tightly knit, this wine very slowly unwinds long after you've swallowed that first sip or two. —P.G.

85 Cave B 2009 Viognier (Columbia Valley); \$20. Pleasant and straightforward, with light fruit flavors of citrus and white peach. It's simple, slightly dilute, with an awkward resolution. —P.G.

83 Martinez & Martinez 2009 Alder Ridge Vineyard Viognier (Horse Heaven Hills); \$18. There is noticeable residual sugar, giving the wine a sweet, honeyed flavor. Along with that you'll find some citrusy fruit, with a bitter edge. —P.G.

OTHER WHITE WINES

94 Tranche 2008 Viognier-Roussanne (Columbia Valley); \$30. Rich, almost

unctuous, with a lush, lanolin mouthfeel, this is a passionfruit creamsicle of a wine. The fruit is a seductive and generous mix of peach, Asian pear and tropical; the alcohol a full-bodied 14.5%. The Roussanne part (58% of the blend) is barrel fermented; the Viognier done in stainless. Blended together they harmonize beautifully. **Editors' Choice.** —P.G.

91 Stevens 2009 AnotherThought Sauvignon Blanc (Yakima Valley); \$19. This is just the third Sauvignon Blanc from Stevens (none was made in 2008), sourced from Klipsun vineyard and stainless steel fermented. Richly textural, with a creamy minerality, this has a pleasing intensity, a sort of nervosity (as the French might put it), limned with a sweet grain character. The fruits are tart and racy, a mix of citrus rind and pulp, tangerine and pineapple, finished with natural acidity. **Editors' Choice.** —P.G.

90 L'Ecole No. 41 2009 Walla Voila Chenin Blanc (Columbia Valley); \$14. You'll find beautiful, lush, complex, fruit-driven aromas here, as with all the L'Ecole white wines. This captures the complexity of the grape—rarely seen in domestic Chenin Blanc—ripe apples, spice, hints of honey and caramel, and a lovely, persistent floral overtone. In short, this is the Chenin Blanc that should be made, that can be made, and that is rarely made in this state. **Best Buy.** —P.G.

89 Davenport Cellars 2009 Snowflake White Wine (Columbia Valley); \$16. Three quarters Sauvignon Blanc and the rest Sémillon, this attractive white wine has an appealing snap to the fruit and an underlying acidity that sets it up in lively fashion. It's a food wine through and through, lightly toasty, with green berries and apples providing the clean fruit flavors. A fine value. **Editors' Choice.** —P.G.

88 Fidelitas 2008 Optu White Wine (Columbia Valley); \$25. A white Bordeaux blend of 56% Gamache vineyard Sauvignon Blanc and 44% Stillwater Creek Sémillon. This is sleek and spicy, with a fresh mouthfeel. The juicy acidity supports flavors of lime, lemon and grapefruit, with a slight toastiness kicking in on the finish. —P.G.

88 Nefarious Cellars 2009 Consequence White Wine (Washington);

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\$17. This new vintage of Consequence deftly mixes the strengths of each grape. The Sauv Blanc provides a pleasingly green, herbal base; the Aligoté fills in with some stone fruit flesh; and the Viognier boosts the aromatics, with floral/citrus highlights. —P.G.

87 Milbrandt 2009 Traditions Pinot Gris (Columbia Valley); \$13. This is quite light and lemony, closer to an Italian Pinot Grigio than to an Oregon Pinot Gris. What it lacks in flesh it compensates for in freshness and vitality; the subtle fruit flavors suggest Asian pear, jicama and cucumber. It would be a lovely match for a light fish such as rainbow trout or Dover sole. —P.G.

81 Martinez & Martinez 2009 Alder Ridge Vineyard Roussanne (Horse Heaven Hills); \$18. Yeasty and beery, this young Roussanne also carries a strong impression of residual sugar. Add alcoholic burn to the mix and the combination does not work; it's a wine at war with itself. —P.G.

CHILE RED WINES

CABERNET SAUVIGNON

93 Concha y Toro 2007 Don Melchor Cabernet Sauvignon (Puente Alto); \$95. Deep, a bit reduced on the nose, and full as can be, with blackberry, cassis and prune aromas. The palate is super rich and concentrated, and frankly a bit heady. Flavors of burnt brown sugar, toast, tobacco, pepper and baked berry fruits are delicious, and the finish is dense and long. Drinkable now but best in another two to four years. This marks the 20th anniversary of Concha y Toro's Don Melchor Cabernet. Imported by Banfi Vintners. —M.S.

93 Domus Aurea 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Maipo Valley); \$60. After a few down years and a couple of winemaker changes, Domus Aurea is back in fine form. The nose is heady, leathery and powerful, while the palate is compact, bullish and tannic. Tastes fabulous with its dynamic mix of brawny berry, tobacco, toast and leather. A Maipo Valley gem with length and complexity. Drink now through 2014. Imported by Global Vineyard Importers. *Editors' Choice.* —M.S.

92 Errazuriz 2007 Viñedo Chadwick Cabernet Sauvignon (Maipo Valley); \$260. Chile's most expensive wine is excellent, and with only 50 cases being imported it's definitely a collector's edition. The nose is deep, dense and black as night, with olive, tobacco, coconut and bold black fruit aromas. The palate is racy and tannic, and the flavors of plum, cassis, blackberry, chocolate, prune and fig are elevated. A tough and ribald wine that will be at its best from 2012–2015. Imported by Vintus LLC. —M.S.

91 Echeverria 2006 Founder's Selection Cabernet Sauvignon (Maipo Valley); \$35. Earthy and a touch shy at first, with lightly floral aromas that blend well with the scents of baked plum, prune and blackberry. It's heavy and cheek-grabbing, but also hugely flavorful and loaded with cassis, blackberry, herbs and tobacco. Long as a marathon on the finish. Drink from 2011 through 2014. 1,000 cases made. Imported by Ararat Import/Export Co. LLC. —M.S.

91 Indomita 2008 Zardoz Cabernet Sauvignon (Maipo Valley); \$30. Let's face it, my scores for Indomita's wines have never been very high. But this high-end, best-of-lot Cabernet is excellent and an eye-catcher. The nose of mocha, coconut, blackberry and herbs is classic Maipo Valley, while the mouth is lush, correct and full of sweet cherry, cassis and tobacco flavors. Comfortable throughout, with unbreakable smoothness. Drink now through 2013. Imported by David Milligan Selections. *Editors' Choice.* —M.S.

90 Caliterra 2008 Tributo Single Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Colchagua Valley); \$20. Dusty, sweet, dark-fruited and properly herbal, this is a Cabernet that very much fits the Chilean blueprint of what the variety should smell and taste like. Creamy and full, with bold berry, herb and vanilla flavors, and then with a lush, dense finish. Drink now through 2012. Imported by Buena Cepa Wines. —M.S.

90 Errazuriz 2008 Single Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Aconcagua Valley); \$21. Dark, sultry and hard at first, but with airing comes a wave of cola, vanilla and black fruit notes that settle in the right way. The palate is healthy and balanced, and the flavors of cherry, currant, plum and tobacco are enticing and long. Herbal in some ways, but not too much. Shows

quality and some short-term aging ability; drink now through 2012. Imported by T.G.I.C. Importers. —M.S.

89 La Playa 2007 Axel Cabernet Sauvignon (Colchagua Valley); \$20. Solid from front to back. The nose is your normal mix of cassis, blackberry, latex glove and licorice nibs, while the palate runs hard and condensed, with ripe black fruit flavors. A little clacky and tough on the tongue and cheeks, but true as you can ask for from a Colchagua Cabernet. Imported by Cabernet Corporation. —M.S.

88 Arboleda 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (Aconcagua Valley); \$19. Dark and charred, with aromas of shoe polish, asphalt, coconut and blackberry. It's masculine in style, with firm tannins that bite down in support of concentrated black fruit, chocolate and spice flavors. Coffee, bitterness and heat work the finish on this tannic, full-bodied Cabernet. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd. —M.S.

88 Aresti 2008 Equilibrio Organically Grown Grapes Cabernet Sauvignon (Maipo Valley); \$11. There's plenty of black fruit and power on the nose. The palate matches that aromatic intensity by showing tannic grab and body along with deep cherry, cassis and tobacco flavors. Finishes earthy and leathery, but with enough berry fruit and richness. Imported by Broadbent Selections, Inc. *Best Buy.* —M.S.

88 Asunto de Vino 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (Central Valley); \$12. Basic but in the best possible way. The nose is familiar, clean and inviting due to licorice, sweet black fruit and smoky aromas. Fresh in the mouth, with bright acidity pumping up berry, cassis and herbal flavors. Composed on the finish, with a high level of competence. Imported by Testa Wines Of The World. *Best Buy.* —M.S.

88 Koyle 2008 Reserva Cabernet Sauvignon (Colchagua Valley); \$17. A touch earthy and leathery at first, but also berry driven and full, with a lot of run to it. The palate has a round, full feel as well as flavors of black cherry, cassis, herbs and tobacco. Chunky on the finish, where it flattens out. Drink now through 2011. Imported by Quintessential Wines. —M.S.

87 Korta 2009 Estate Bottled Cabernet Sauvignon (Lontué Valley); \$8. Dark, fruity and common in every way, but sometimes that's all you need. The wine has a clean, ordinary cassis and berry nose followed by a juicy palate with dark fruit flavors that show accents of vanilla, spice and chocolate. Totally drinkable and likable. Imported by MJM Imports. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

87 Veo 2008 Última Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon (Colchagua Valley); \$10. Sweet and chunky to start, with vanilla and red fruit aromas. The flavors are raspberry and cherry, and while it's kind of short on complexity, it more than gets the job done for \$10. Clean, fresh and something you can drink without a lot of pondering. Imported by Prestige Wine Group. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

87 William Cole 2008 Columbine Special Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon (Colchagua Valley); \$18. Big, muscular and herbal, with olive, spice and driving black fruit aromas. The acidity is high-toned and elevated, so the palate is jumpy and electric, with raspberry and currant flavors. Delivers a jolt and tang, but overall the flavors and harmony are good. Imported by Global Vineyard Importers. —M.S.

87 Undurraga 2008 Aliwen Reserva Cabernet Sauvignon-Carmenère (Rapel Valley); \$13. Thick and meaty on the nose, with aromas of cola and spice. The palate has a tight structure, some sharpness and spicy, braised-fruit and tobacco flavors. Finishes mostly in the spice zone, with dried fruits and a spot of leftover acidic bite. Good for a basic Cabernet-Carmenère blend. Imported by Undurraga USA. —M.S.

86 Maniña 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon (Central Valley); \$13. Rubber and black fruits carry the standard nose, then comes a zesty palate with upfront acids and related zingy berry fruit flavors. Despite a touch of scour, this brings freshness and a clean, tasty fruit level. Perfectly good for Central Valley Cabernet. Imported by Winery Exchange. —M.S.

86 MontGras 2009 Reserva Cabernet Sauvignon-Syrah (Colchagua Valley); \$12. Dark, baked, warm and spicy, with a touch of soupiness but nothing too scary or dominating. The palate is thorough and fairly lush, with black fruit flavors accented by spice and

baked notes. Finishes slightly burnt notes, with licorice and ripe softness. Imported by Palm Bay International. —M.S.

86 Peñalolen 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (Maipo Valley); \$18. Full and concentrated but also a little flat and prune. This wine pushes ripeness to the max level, and the result is a heavy, tannic Cab with a lot of power and flavors of prune, chocolate, molasses and fig. Thick and chunky on the finish, too. Soft and dense enough to drink now through 2011. Imported by Global Vineyard Importers. —M.S.

86 Viña el Aromo 2007 Barrel Selection (Maule Valley); \$19. Fiery cherry/berry aromas mix with leather, herbal scents and mocha. The palate is angular and mildly sharp, with zesty red fruit, pepper and herbal flavors. A driving, acid-propelled blend of Cabernet Sauvignon along with Carmenère and Petit Verdot. Imported by Simone International. —M.S.

86 Viña el Aromo 2008 Winemaker's Selection Cabernet-Syrah (Maule Valley); \$16. Starts out smoky and savory, with aromas of jerky and baked black fruits. The palate is fairly juicy and lively, with a good feel and then flavors of cherry and roasted plum. Tastes a bit roasted as well on the finish despite some lingering juicy acidity and snap. Imported by Simone International. —M.S.

85 Veo 2009 Grande Cabernet Sauvignon (Colchagua Valley); \$7. Bargain hunters should like this mildly medicinal Cab because it's got raspberry and black fruit character and only minor faults, i.e. slight medicinal. Otherwise it's fruity, steady and respectable, with good body and mouthfeel. Imported by Prestige Wine Group. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

84 Indomita 2008 Duetto Cabernet Sauvignon-Carmenère (Maipo Valley); \$20. There's a lot of individuality to this wine, just not all good. The nose has cigar box and over-the-top sweet and baked aromas, yet the palate has a grating, acidic feel but also spice and raisiny flavors. All of it makes you more confused than confident; it has its good traits but seems out of whack. Imported by David Milligan Selections. —M.S.

84 Undurraga 2008 Aliwen Reserva Cabernet Sauvignon-Syrah (Rapel Valley); \$13. Leathery and horsey on the nose, with cherry fruit and warmth. The palate has some edge and bite to it, with lean tannins in support of generic raspberry and standard herbal flavors. Quick and cleansing on the finish, with another wave of herbal flavor. Imported by Undurraga USA. —M.S.

84 Vistamar 2006 Gran Reserva Cabernet Sauvignon-Syrah (Maipo Valley); \$17. Oakly stuff, with sawdust, roasted fruit and dark, floral berry aromas. The palate is surprisingly high in acidity and choppy, but lumbering oak adds some heft to the berry fruit and cola flavors that lead the charge. A bit smacking and medicinal, and herbal to boot. Imported by Vistamar USA. —M.S.

83 Tamaya 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon (Limari Valley); \$13. A cool-climate CS with briar and sharpness from the get-go. There's also herbal red fruit aromas the precede a pointed palate of cherry, raspberry and acidity. Pretty good flavors but hardly any softness, texture or finesse. Imported by Ecosur Group, LLC. —M.S.

82 Indomita 2008 Reserva Cabernet Sauvignon (Maipo Valley); \$15. Odd and unfamiliar, like most wines from Indomita. The nose is off the grid and grainy, while the palate is flat, heavy and tastes of herbal, sweet, vegetal berry fruits. Candied on the finish and unconvincing. Imported by David Milligan Selections. —M.S.

82 Pacifico Sur 2006 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon-Merlot (Curicó Valley); \$15. Vegetal is how I'd describe it, with strong aromas of tomato leaf, olive, briar and wet earth. The palate is snappy to the point of being sharp, and the flavors are rooty yet pointed, with notes of baked cherry and plum showing up. A very herbal, stripped-back type of wine. Imported by Rio Joe's Brands Inc. —M.S.

82 Sun Valley 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon (Lontué Valley); \$8. Cherry-berry aromas mix with a hint of vinegar and cleanser to create a sketchy, foreboding bouquet. The wine is a little blocky in the mouth, with both weedy-herbal and plum-berry flavors. Finishes with tolerable but noticeable bitterness and burn. Imported by MJM Imports. —M.S.

CARIGNAN

90 Odfjell 2006 Orzada Carignan (Maule Valley); \$20. Cola, sarsaparilla and fine rubber give this wine a dark personality that's infused with brighter raspberry and black cherry. The palate has a thick, chewy, mature feel to it, while the flavors are earthy, rambunctious and savory. Finishes creamy and full, with easing tannins and nice fruity leftovers. Drink now through 2011. Imported by Select Fine Wine. —M.S.

90 Odfjell 2007 Orzada Tres Esquinas Organic Carignan (Maule Valley); \$20. Sweet smelling, with hints of tree bark, molasses and rooty cola. The palate is softer and easier than some Cauquenes Carignans, but it's deep and satisfying, with flavors of blackberry, cola and fine herbs. Among Chile's emerging crop of high-end Carignans, this is one to try immediately and over the next two or three years. Imported by Select Fine Wine. —M.S.

90 Santa Ema 2006 Amplus Old Vines Carignan (Peumo); \$27. A rock-solid wine with bright currant, berry and rooty, cola-infused aromas. The mouthfeel is excellent and integrated, with earthy, savory, spicy flavors of blackberry, cherry and tea. Long and savory on the finish, with complexity. Wines like this are what make the Chilean Carignan category worth exploring. Drink now through 2012. Imported by T.G.I.C. Importers. —M.S.

89 Santa Ema 2007 Amplus Old Vine Carignan (Peumo); \$30. Bold, dark, full and saucy, with aromas of plum and blackberry. Jammy but lively on the palate, with vanilla sweetness offsetting plum, blackberry, leather and savory notes. This is true Peumo Carignan with potency and blazing acidity. It's not as flavorful and complete as the 2006, but maybe it just needs another year or two in bottle. Imported by T.G.I.C. Importers. —M.S.

87 Morandé 2007 Edición Limitada Carignan (Loncomilla Valley); \$22. An aggressive, forward, high-acid wine with a lot of quality as well. The nose mixes dried cheese, leather, heat and savory red fruit aromas, while the palate rides a tight line of acidity toward angular raspberry and cherry flavors. Very zesty, tart and lively, but also deep in terms of mineral-

ity, freshness and potency. Drink now through 2012. Imported by Morande USA. —M.S.

CARMENÈRE

90 Santa Carolina 2008 Reserva de Familia Carmenère (Rapel Valley); \$20. This particular wine is fast becoming one of Chile's go-to Carmenères. For the second year in a row it impresses with a heady nose of black fruits, pastry and cola. After that, you get a palate full of spicy, rich baked berry, dusty pepper and smoked meat. As a whole it offers character, structure and kick. Imported by QW Wine Experts. —M.S.

89 San Pedro 2008 1865 Single Vineyard Carmenère (Maule Valley); \$19. A controlled opening is welcome, as are the soft, smooth aromas of tobacco, dark plum and warm earth. Full and generous in the mouth, with heft and balance. Tastes like a mix of roasted dark plum, blackberry, fig and spice. Big and blowsy, but it emphasizes what's good about new age Carmenère. Imported by Shaw-Ross International Importers. —M.S.

88 Carmen 2007 Reserva Carmenère-Cabernet Sauvignon (Maipo Valley); \$20. Dry, leafy and herbal, with cherry, berry and mossy aromas. The palate is meaty and chewy, with an extra dose of heft and body to support black fruit and herbal flavors. The finish is kind of quick and mild, but also clean and satisfying. A nice mixture of Carmenère and Cabernet Sauvignon. Imported by Aveniu Brands, Inc. —M.S.

88 Concha y Toro 2008 Marques de Casa Concha Carmenère (Peumo); \$22. Nice and aromatic, with cola, tobacco, fallen dried leaves and dark fruits. The palate has some scratch and acidity to it, but the flavors are good and lively, with a focus on dark plum and cherry. A bit more acidic than I like, but still healthy and very nice for varietal Carmenère. Imported by Banfi Vintners. —M.S.

88 Crucero 2008 Carmenère (Colchagua Valley); \$10. Herbal, powerful and varietally on the money, with common but well-executed aromas of earth, blackberry and olives. The palate offers proper weight and intensity, while the flavors of black plum, raspberry and tea are just herbal enough to scream out

"Carmenère." Tasty and consistent from nose to finish. Imported by Kysela Père et Fils. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

86 Asunto de Vino 2008 Carmenère (Central Valley); \$12. Nice and familiar for the variety, with common herbal, beefy, black fruit aromas followed by a chunky palate of blackberry, black cherry, mocha and herbs. Clean and solid on the finish, with 15% Cabernet in the blend. Imported by Testa Wines Of The World. —M.S.

86 Calina 2009 Reserva Carmenère (Maule Valley); \$10. Warm, syrupy, jammy and brambly up front, with the grape's typical meaty, herbal aromas. The palate is soft save for core acidity, while the flavors run medium-rich and plummy, with controlled sourness. Solid for the money, with a chunky disposition. Imported by Sovereign Wine Imports. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

86 Concha y Toro 2008 Xplorador Carmenère (Central Valley); \$8. Rich and concentrated for an entry-level wine, with earthy, bold aromas and a lush, well-balanced palate feel. Deep and sweet in terms of flavor, with a mix of ripe black fruits and herbs. Shows a bit of faux oak flavor on a mocha-tinged finish. Exemplary for this price range. Imported by Banfi Vintners. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

86 Viña Bisquit 2007 La Joya Reserve Carmenère (Colchagua Valley); \$12. Kind of generic on the nose, with licorice and shy black fruit and herbal aromas. The palate is chunky and thick, with blocky flavors of baked black fruits, olive and caramel. A chunky, ripe wine with a hint of raisin and a broad mouthfeel. Imported by Prestige Wine Group. —M.S.

85 El Huique 2007 Reserve Carmenère (Colchagua Valley); \$13. A bit sharp and volatile at first, but with time the aromas mellow out to rest on black fruits and olive. The palate has a lively kick to it but it's also sort of hard and heavy, with roasted, basic black fruit and herbal flavors. Caramelized on the finish, but aggressive as a whole. Imported by Vidalco International, LLC. —M.S.

85 San Elias 2008 Carmenère (Central Valley); \$9. Earth, leather and roasted berry fruit are exactly what a wine of this base

grape and price should smell like. The palate is medium in intensity, with herbal flavors, dark berry fruit notes and leather. Call it basic but comfortable, with varietal correctness. Imported by Kysela Père et Fils. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

85 Santa Alicia 2007 Gran Reserva de los Andes Carmenère (Maipo Valley); \$12. Not as dark and sticky as many wines of this variety; the nose is defined by cherry and raspberry along with barnyard and animal hide. At first the palate seems sharp and acidic, but with time it settles on fuller, more creamy cherry and raspberry along with mocha. Narrow on the finish but fresh and forward. Imported by Halby Marketing. —M.S.

85 Tamaya 2009 Reserva Carmenère (Limarí Valley); \$16. Herbal from the beginning, with bell pepper, olive and brambly fruit aromas. Round and full in the mouth, with flavors of wild berry, green pepper, carob and spice. The mouthfeel is mostly positive but acidic, and the green element is more than a bit player. Imported by Ecosur Group, LLC. —M.S.

84 Aresti 2007 Equilibrio Made With Organically Grown Grapes Carmenère (Maipo Valley); \$12. Solid but earthy and damp on the nose. The palate is more lean, fresh and sharp than you might expect, while the flavor grouping of herbal fruit, coffee, mocha and leather is normal for the grape type. Toasty on the finish, with a touch of bite and tang. Imported by Broadbent Selections, Inc. —M.S.

84 Errazuriz 2009 Estate Carmenère (Central Valley); \$12. Herbal, brambly aromas mix with dark berry, mocha and vanilla aromas, while the palate is creamy and soft, with herbal, almost vegetal flavors and not much defined fruit or clarity. Finishes as herbal as it starts, with coffee and green tobacco flavors. Imported by Vintus LLC. —M.S.

84 Las Lomas 2008 Carmenère (Maule Valley); \$12. Neutral black fruit and herbal, leathery aromas are generic, while the palate is fleshy but short on flavor, with dried black fruit notes and a spot of herbal olive. Lighter-framed for the grape type, and simple in its overall approach. Imported by AMG Organic Imports, LLC. —M.S.

84 Tamaya 2009 Carmenère (Limarí Valley); \$13. Sharp and jangled on the

nose, with a strong “varietal” aroma package of olive, herbs and stem. The palate is forward and less thick than the winery’s reserva from 2009, while the flavors are lean and a little green, with finishing acidic bite. Imported by Ecosur Group, LLC. —M.S.

83 Chono 2007 Reserva Carmenère-Syrah (Elqui Valley); \$15. The combo of Carmenère and Syrah isn’t working in full harmony here. The wine is a heavy load of black fruit, fatty weight and weedy sweetness. It tastes herbal and candied, with a soft, bulky feel. Also a little bit stewed. Imported by Montecastelli Selections. —M.S.

83 Viña Tarapacá 2008 Gran Reserva Carmenère (Maipo Valley); \$19. Aggressive early on, with foxy, briary aromas of turned earth, olive, rhubarb and green tobacco. The palate is fleshy, soft and welcoming, but the flavors are a sketchy amalgam of bramble, leather and herbal raspberry. Mouthfeel is the best part. Imported by MHW, Ltd. —M.S.

82 Apaltagua 2008 Envero Gran Reserva Carmenère-Cabernet Sauvignon (Colchagua Valley); \$15. Disappointing considering how much I’ve liked this wine in the past. But the ‘08 is funky and very much from the old school of Carmenère, meaning it’s dull-edged, thick, herbal and overly earthy on the nose and palate. Just too heavy, roasted and peppery for my liking. With 7% Cabernet Sauvignon. Imported by Global Vineyard Importers. —M.S.

82 Santa Alicia 2009 Reserva Carmenère (Maipo Valley); \$9. Murky and soupy at worst and “earthy” at best, this soft, beefy Carmenère is loaded down with green, herbal flavors that can’t be saved by touches of mocha and coffee. The finish is downright green, and overall the fruit is weak. Imported by Halby Marketing. —M.S.

81 Casa Silva 2008 Reserva Carmenère (Colchagua Valley); \$12. Soupy and herbal smelling, which is what naysayers claim is Carmenère’s scarlet letter. A little horsey, as well. In the mouth, it’s loose and wet but not well structured, and the flavors are herbal, murky and foxy. Casa Silva claims to be the king of Carmenère but this wine leaves me unimpressed. Imported by Vin Divino. —M.S.

MALBEC

85 Caliterra 2008 Tributo Single Vineyard Malbec (Colchagua Valley); \$20. Vanilla, wood shavings, charcoal and floral berry aromas come with a hint of minty green. The palate has a healthy but common grabbiness to it, with flavors of black cherry, cassis and herbs. Almost cloying on the finish, with candied notes and vanilla. A strange wine that doesn’t fully come together. Imported by Buena Cepa Wines. —M.S.

83 Viu Manent 2008 Estate Collection Malbec (Colchagua Valley); \$9. Starts out with grassy, gamy aromas that are not up to what I’ve tasted from Viu Manent. This wine is bulky but also clumsy and regular at best. It has a simple, grassy set of generic berry flavors followed by a heavy finish. Granted, it’s \$9, so with tempered expectations it’s not a deceiver. Imported by Baystate Wine Co.. —M.S.

83 Viu Manent 2008 Secreto Malbec (Colchagua Valley); \$14. Quite charred and hard, which is something I can’t remember in tasting VM’s wines for the past decade. It’s also plummy and thick, with a flat palate that doesn’t register on the mouthfeel meter. Flavors of black fruits are lemony from the oak and generic, while the finish is round and basic. Imported by Baystate Wine Co. —M.S.

80 Calcu 2008 Malbec (Colchagua Valley); \$12. Smells like Kool-aid and pine needles, with some sweat thrown in. The palate follows suit, showing a choppy, scratchy mouthfeel and flavors of tart red fruits and funk. Is that fish I smell? This wine proves that not all Malbecs are wonderful. Imported by Global Vineyard Importers. —M.S.

MERLOT

91 Casa Lapostolle 2007 Cuvée Alexandre Apalta Vineyard Merlot (Colchagua Valley); \$24. Black in color, with sweet, full-force aromas of cola and black fruits. There’s staunch acidity on the palate, something that will barely be noticed if drunk with food. Meanwhile, the flavors are flashy but smooth, with a play toward coffee, blackberry, chocolate and herbs. Dense and deep; very nice

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Merlot. Imported by Moët Hennessy USA. —M.S.

88 Arboleda 2007 Merlot (Aconcagua Valley); \$19. Powerful, driving Merlot with spice, cherry, herbal olive notes and some meatiness to the bouquet. The palate is racy and forward, with cherry-berry flavors, cola, mocha and oak notes on the finish. A solid, strong-boned wine. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd. —M.S.

87 Montes 2007 Alpha Merlot (Colchagua Valley); \$24. Warm, rubbery berry aromas mixed with smoked meat and herbal accents make for a solid nose, and while the palate has clumpy acidity and herbal notes, there's ample body, roundness and berry fruit to bring it home. Both leafy and candied on the finish. Imported by T.G.I.C. Importers. —M.S.

87 Viña Bisquertt 2007 Ecos de Rulo Merlot (Colchagua Valley); \$18. Leafy and leathery to start, with olive, prune and herb aromas filling in the fabric. The palate has a fleshy, fairly tannic grab but the flavors are round and full, with a tack toward blackberry. Mildly herbal on the finish, which is par for the course with Chilean Merlot. Imported by Prescott Wines. —M.S.

87 Viña Casablanca 2008 Cefiro Reserva Merlot (Maipo Valley); \$10. Licorice, mint leaf, black pepper and a hint of tomato define the nose, while the palate has a regular, lightly choppy feel along with flavors of olive, herbal berry fruit and pepper. Dry and smooth on the finish, with lightness and good balance. Good Merlot for the price. Imported by Carolina Wine Brands USA. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

86 Arboleda 2008 Merlot (Aconcagua Valley); \$19. Dark and charred, with black cherry, black licorice and a burnt-oak element on the nose. The palate is thick and firm, with dark berry, herbal notes and some additional burnt char. Finishes with herbal flavors, olive notes and carob. An obvious Chilean Merlot; comes straight from central casting. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd. —M.S.

86 Viña Bisquertt 2008 La Joya Reserve Merlot (Colchagua Valley); \$12. An earthy wine with aromas of saddle leather, roast berries and some rubber. The palate feel is reasonably smooth, while the flavor profile

blends creamy chocolaty notes with standard cassis and blackberry fruit. A little cooked and candied but holds it together for the most part. Imported by Prestige Wine Group. —M.S.

83 Crucero 2007 Reserva Merlot (Colchagua Valley); \$10. Warm, earthy and stewed smelling, but then sharp and tangy and acidic in the mouth. Red fruits are dominant, but there's a persistent scour to the wine that doesn't allow it to get to the next level of quality or ripeness. Imported by Kysela Père et Fils. —M.S.

83 Viña La Rosa 2008 La Palma Reserva Merlot (Cachapoal Valley); \$10. Mild vinegar and full-fledged herbal aromas are typical of traditional Chilean Merlot, and while the palate is solid, it's also scratchy, with tart raspberry and semiweedy flavors. Finishes with burnt brown sugar, herbal flavors and grating acidity. Imported by MJM Imports. —M.S.

81 Asunto de Vino 2008 Merlot (Central Valley); \$12. Hot, herbal and just not convincing. The palate is dilute and offers no midlevel, and the flavors are a strange mix of citrusy fruit and herbal weediness. Crisp and lean on the finish, and not bringing much to the table as a whole. Imported by Testa Wines Of The World. —M.S.

PINOT NOIR

85 Simone 2007 Winemaker's Collection Pinot Noir (Bío Bío Valley); \$15. Earthy and a touch burnt on the nose, with standard berry and black cherry aromas. The palate is mostly fresh and clean, with honest but limited flavors of dried cherry, spice and tea. Not a strained or forced PN, but basic nonetheless. Imported by Simone International. —M.S.

84 Viña el Aromo 2007 Winemaker's Selection Pinot Noir (Bío Bío Valley); \$16. Citric on the nose, with cherry and bland earthy notes. The palate has an inoffensive feel and sweet flavors of black cherry and vanilla. That sweetness carries onto the finish, which is also candied. Generally decent but highly regular. Imported by Simone International. —M.S.

83 Sassy Bitch 2008 Pinot Noir (Central Valley); \$10. The bouquet suggests burnt rubber, compost and briar patch along

with basic raspberry/cherry. The palate has a mild creaminess to it and herbal, lightly stemmy flavors of raspberry and rhubarb. Finishes tart, with herbs and vanilla. Imported by Seven Hills Trading Company. —M.S.

82 Llai Llai 2008 Pinot Noir (Bío Bío Valley); \$13. Flat, dusty and candied smelling, with little body or concentration. The flavors are generic and hint at strawberry, and overall it fits the definition of a subpar New World Pinot Noir. Acceptable but barely worth a go. Imported by W.J. Deutsch & Sons. —M.S.

SYRAH/SHIRAZ

89 Montes 2008 Alpha Syrah (Colchagua Valley); \$24. Opens nicely, with hints of olive, earth, rubber and leather. The palate is juicy and lively, while flavors of coconut, toast and black fruit meld together in good fashion. A fresh, clean style of Syrah that's forward but not hard or tannic. Imported by T.G.I.C. Importers. —M.S.

88 Concha y Toro 2008 Marques de Casa Concha Syrah (Maipo Valley); \$22. Nice aromas of cherry fruit and sweetness are perfectly clean, while the palate is slightly spunky and high in acid, with wild-berry flavors running side by side with red cherry and citrus. Has a tart, blazing side but also very good fruit character and purity. Imported by Banfi Vintners. —M.S.

87 El Huique 2005 Special Selection Syrah-Cabernet (Colchagua Valley); \$15. Slightly rough and leathery on first take, and a little soupy as well. Airing clears things up, leaving a steady, mildly stewed wine with roasted plum and blackberry flavors. Ripe, sweet and generous, with a controlled finish that properly reflects the wine's flavors and mouthfeel. Imported by Vidalco International, LLC. —M.S.

87 Gracia de Chile 2008 Reserva Superior Syrah-Grenache-Viognier (Cachapoal Valley); \$14. A little funky and murky at first, but airing reveals meaty, leathery aromas. The palate is solid and shows good balance, while the flavors of berry and cherry fruit carry an herbal element. Finishes mildly peppery and bitter, but also floral and spicy. Imported by Great Wines Corpora. —M.S.

86 Santa Rita 2006 Reserva Shiraz (Maipo Valley); \$12. Smells like a mix of leather, olive paste and sea foam along with bold berries. The palate is saturated and layered, with thick blackberry and full, herbal accents. Chewy and beefy stuff, with a brooding, bulky personality and an herbal, baked finish. Imported by Palm Bay International. —M.S.

86 Viña Bisquit 2008 La Joya Reserve Syrah (Colchagua Valley); \$12. Big and tarry, with asphalt and black fruit galore on the nose. A full, heavy, saturated style of wine with chunky blackberry and sweet, syrupy flavors. Rich but candied, with a bit of toast to the finish. Imported by Prestige Wine Group. —M.S.

85 San Pedro 2008 Castillo de Molina Shiraz (Maule Valley); \$12. Dark in color, smoky and full of coconut and mocha aromas. However, the palate is more acidic, tight and starching than ideal. Add in peppery, herbal flavors to the black cherry, oak and high acidity and it gives off a tight, crisp personality. Imported by Shaw-Ross International Importers. —M.S.

83 Espiritu de Chile 2008 Shiraz-Cabernet Sauvignon (Central Valley); \$9. Smells a little too much like nail polish and cherry candy, while the acidic palate has a wiry mouthfeel and herbal, brambly red fruit flavors. Finishes herbal, with some carob. A snappy, simple-at-best wine. Imported by Cecchetti Racke. —M.S.

OTHER RED WINES

89 Errazuriz 2007 The Blend Limited Edition (Aconcagua Valley); \$35. Solid and deep, with straight-ahead, monotone aromas of cassis and blackberry. The palate is solid, full and offers nice feel and composition, while the flavor profile bursts with black cherry and dark plum flavors. Toasty and heated on the finish, with lingering tastes of licorice and burnt toast. Syrah with smaller amounts of Cab Franc, Carmenère and white Roussanne. Imported by Vintus LLC. —M.S.

88 Caliterra 2007 Tributo Edicion Limitada (Colchagua Valley); \$NA. Rooty and rich at first blush, with dark, black fruit aromas leading the charge. The palate is lively and snappy, with fleshy but short flavors of blackberry, cassis

liqueur and coconut. Quite extracted and full but also a touch hard and short, with a few holes in the texture. Carmenère (60%) and Malbec (40%). Imported by Buena Cepa Wines. —M.S.

87 Caliterra 2007 Cenit (Colchagua Valley); \$NA. Heady, tight, piercing aromas are a good indication of the wine's style and sense of attack. The palate is firm, acidic and driving but ultimately more basic and generic than individual or exciting. It's tangy and focuses on raspberry and peppery qualities. Good and structured but also tight. Imported by Buena Cepa Wines. —M.S.

86 Tamaya 2008 Reserva (Limarí Valley); \$16. This Malbec-led blend is shy but ultimately pretty good. The nose offers cotton candy and floral berry fruit aromas, while the palate has some narrowness and holes in the fabric but nice flavors of floral blueberry and citrus. It's snappy, fresh and different. Malbec at 55% with 24% Cabernet and 21% Syrah. Imported by Ecosur Group, LLC. —M.S.

83 Palo Alto 2008 Reserva (Maule Valley); \$13. Aromas of tobacco, molasses and damp moss suggest earthiness, yet the palate is piercing and high-wire, with bright, almost blinding acidity pushing cherry and red plum flavors. Kind of gritty on the finish, where the tannins and acids combine. Imported by Banfi Vintners. —M.S.

81 Asunto de Vino 2008 Shiraz-Carmenère (Central Valley); \$12. Hightoned, with artificial qualities of air freshener, perfume and candied fruit. The palate has a clacky feel, tannic bite and not a whole lot of flavor for Shiraz and Carmenère other than rudimentary berry and cherry. Finishes herbal as well. Imported by Testa Wines Of The World. —M.S.

81 Caliterra 2008 Tributo Edicion Limitada (Colchagua Valley); \$NA. Sharp and smells of juniper, cactus and other angular, not-too-fruity elements. The palate is thin and clacky, with herbal, short, red-berry flavors. Imported by Buena Cepa Wines. —M.S.

ROSÉ WINES

83 Calcu 2010 Rosé (Colchagua Valley); \$12. Pink and light, with a sharp nose that's sweaty and sour. The palate is quite

strong in acidity, so there's razor-like sharpness and spiky flavors of grapefruit and early season red plums. Overly zesty and tart; made from Malbec, Syrah and Petit Verdot. Imported by Global Vineyard Importers. —M.S.

82 Caliterra 2010 Reserva Rosé (Colchagua Valley); \$NA. Crimson in color, with aromas of chlorine, burnt stems and rubbery berry fruit. The palate is both mushy and overly acidic, as if that's possible, while the weighty palate shows sweet plum and bitterness on the finish. Too heavy and not dry enough. Imported by Buena Cepa Wines. —M.S.

CHILE WHITE WINES

CHARDONNAY

89 Quintay 2008 Chardonnay (Casablanca Valley); \$16. Fully oaked and modern, with popcorn, buttered toast and baked apple aromas. The palate is nicely layered and integrated, with lemon, orange and banana flavors. Complex given the competition, but also smooth and very good by Chilean standards. Imported by Montecastelli Selections. —M.S.

88 Concha y Toro 2008 Amelia Limited Release Chardonnay (Casablanca Valley); \$35. Always one of Chile's more oaky Chards, Amelia offers popcorn, toast, minerality and peach/apricot aromas. The palate is both delicate and high in acidity, with punchy flavors of apricot, peach and orange. Finishes pithy but lively, with forwardness and plenty of verve. Imported by Banfi Vintners. —M.S.

87 Caliterra 2008 Tributo Single Vineyard Chardonnay (Casablanca Valley); \$20. Mildly toasty and buttery on the nose, then wet, zesty and citric in the mouth, but with boundaries and corpulent borders that maintain integrity. Finishes toasty with some vanilla, but also mildly pithy. A solid Chardonnay by New World standards. Imported by Buena Cepa Wines. —M.S.

86 Crucero 2009 Chardonnay (Colchagua Valley); \$10. Generic Chardonnay but still pretty good, with oily, nutty, tropical aromas followed by a zesty, acidic palate that

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loads up on apple and citrusy orange-like flavors. Shows good length and clarity on the finish, and overall it outperforms the winery's so-called "reserva" Chard from the same year. Imported by Kysela Père et Fils. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

86 Viña Requingua 2009 Puerto Viejo Chardonnay (Curicó Valley); \$10. Neutral and almondy, with hints of baked apple, toast and butter. The palate is soft and cushioned with melon and banana flavors. Finishes round, smooth but short on pulse, with weight but no oxidation. The time is now to drink this value-priced Chilean Chard. Imported by Puerto Viejo Wines. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

85 Montes 2009 Classic Series Chardonnay (Curicó Valley); \$12. Salinic on the nose, like a swimming pool, with nutty hints of apple, pear and butter. The wine tastes resinous and toasty, and also a little manufactured, with sweet apple and melon flavors mixed with toast and sugar. Chunky, decent and pedestrian, even by Chilean standards. Imported by T.G.I.C. Importers. —M.S.

85 Viña el Aromo 2008 Barrel Selection Chardonnay (Maule Valley); \$19. Big, oaky and toasty on the nose, and then zesty and pithy in the mouth, with citrus, tangerine, lemon and not much else. Call it a one-trick pony and get ready for citrusy flavors and little variation on that theme. The good thing is, for a Maule Chard it plays its hand right. Imported by Simone International. —M.S.

84 Casa Lapostolle 2009 Casa Chardonnay (Casablanca Valley); \$13. Toasty, oak-based spice and baked-apple aromas are sweet and woody, while the rest of the wine is resinous, with flavors of cinnamon, spiced applesauce and banana. Finishes with little fruit and a lot of faux oak flavor. Sticky as well. Imported by Moët Hennessy USA. —M.S.

84 San Elias 2009 Chardonnay (Central Valley); \$9. Early aromas of apple and pear show no oak, but with time more pungent notes of juniper and herbs enter the fray. Juicy in the mouth, with no weight issues, but modest in its delivery of true Chardonnay character. Clean white wine but it doesn't taste like much. Imported by Kysela Père et Fils. —M.S.

84 Santa Rita 2009 120 Chardonnay (Central Valley); \$8. Lemony and a

touch chemical, but for \$8 it's more right than wrong. The flavors are citrusy and austere, much like white grapefruit and gooseberry. But the palate has some plumpness, and the finish, while pithy, is honest. Imported by Palm Bay International. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

84 William Cole 2009 Albamar Chardonnay (Casablanca Valley); \$11. A little mealy on the nose, with apple and melon aromas poking through. The palate is both pithy and sharp, with citric acids providing the basis for grapefruit and orange flavors. Pithy on the finish, with passionfruit notes. Imported by Global Vineyard Importers. —M.S.

83 Santa Carolina 2008 Reserva de Familia Chardonnay (Casablanca Valley); \$20. Not much in the way of aromas except for flatness and apple juice. This wine is a cipher for the most part; it has flat apple and lemon flavors and then a maderized finish that is wheaty and suggests vanilla. Not fully vital; could already be past its prime. Imported by QW Wine Experts. —M.S.

82 Crucero 2009 Reserva Chardonnay (Colchagua Valley); \$13. If you're buying Crucero 2009 Chardonnay, stick with the Best Buy regular bottling; this Reserva is overoaked, high on acid and doesn't really come together that well. The bouquet is all resin and toast, while the high-acid palate is searing and sour, with tart lemon flavors. Imported by Kysela Père et Fils. —M.S.

SAUVIGNON BLANC

89 Santa Rita 2009 Medalla Real Single Estate Sauvignon Blanc (Leyda Valley); \$20. Pithy and peachy on the nose, and not nearly as zesty smelling as it is in the mouth, where angular, crisp acids push flavors of citrus and passionfruit. Zesty with a ton of kick, and very much in the Leyda mold of being oceanic and full of passionfruit. Mature but not fading; drink before summer 2011. Imported by The Thomas Collective. —M.S.

88 Arboleda 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Leyda Valley); \$17. Lively and a touch prickly, with strong aromas and flavors that properly reflect its Leyda roots. The nose is oceanic and sharp, while the palate is forward and tastes of lime and grapefruit. On the finish,

notes of passionfruit and lychee are introduced. Tropical but true SB to drink as soon as possible. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd. —M.S.

87 Montes 2009 Classic Series Sauvignon Blanc (Casablanca Valley); \$12. Clean and ripe, with apple, pear and zesty citrus aromas. The palate runs more round and candied than linear and sharp, with sweet, welcoming flavors of white peach and dried citrus fruits. Fuller-bodied and inviting, but still fresh. Drink immediately. Imported by T.G.I.C. Importers. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

86 Espiritu de Chile 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Central Valley); \$9. Tropical and also citric, and holding steady as the 2010s hit the market. The palate here is familiar, tangy and well constructed, with sweet melon and zesty citrus flavors offsetting one another. The finish is easy and overall this is a fresh, clean, modest wine that should be drunk right away. Imported by Cecchetti Racke. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

86 Kingston Family 2009 Cariblanco Sauvignon Blanc (Casablanca Valley); \$16. Tropical and more blunt and citric than previous vintages. At first blush, it's borderline sheering and sharp, but with time it mellows and settles on pungent grapefruit and citrus flavors. Predominantly it's about zest and power; not as balanced as prior bottlings. Imported by Kingston Family Vineyards. —M.S.

86 Ventisquero 2009 Queulat Sauvignon Blanc (Casablanca Valley); \$17. Flowery and powdery on the nose, and then pillowy on the palate. Yes, there's enough acidity here to keep it vital, while the flavors lean toward sweet, ripe passion fruit and pink grapefruit. Very easygoing and at peak maturity; drink now. Imported by The Thomas Collective. —M.S.

85 Santa Carolina 2009 Ocean Side Specialties Sauvignon Blanc (San Antonio); \$15. Over-the-top, starting with the aromas of nettle, sweat and grapefruit. With Sauvignon Blanc there's citric and then there's citric, and this SB forgoes elegance and finesse and instead pushes wild grapefruit, passionfruit and green citrus. It's extreme and highly aggressive. Needs refining. Imported by QW Wine Experts. —M.S.

85 Viña La Rosa 2009 La Palma Sauvignon Blanc (Cachapoal Valley); \$8.

Smells like pineapple blended with lemon candy. Zesty in the mouth, with crisp lemon, lime, bell pepper and a touch of mineral stoniness. Long on the finish, and for a wine of this price it's delivering the max. Likable and not complicated. Imported by MJM Imports. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

84 Crucero 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Curicó Valley); \$10.

Nothing special but probably a better wine and better value than Crucero's Reserva SB. The nose offers matchstick and some hard minerality, while the palate is crisp and tangy but gives smooth edges and reasonably nice citrus and mineral flavors. Highly regular, even for a Central Valley Sauvignon Blanc. Imported by Kysela Père et Fils. —M.S.

84 Odfjell 2009 Armador Sauvignon Blanc (Casablanca Valley); \$12.

Grapefruit and oily mineral aromas are typical of average Chilean SB, while the palate carries a bland citrusy feel and generic flavors of lemon and grapefruit. A citrusy specimen, but that's about all it's showing. Imported by Select Fine Wine. —M.S.

84 San Elias 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Central Valley); \$9.

Generic tropical fruit and melon aromas are basic but still largely fresh. The palate brings a zesty, acid-driven approach and flavors of lemon and sour orange. Finishes crisp but short on flavor; adequate but not offering a lot. Typical Central Valley SB. Imported by Kysela Père et Fils. —M.S.

83 Crucero 2009 Reserva Sauvignon Blanc (Curicó Valley); \$13.

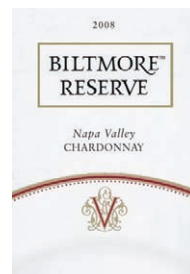
Sulfur and matchstick on the nose is offputting, while what remains suggests oily green fruits. The palate is sharp and acidic, with green fruit flavors and a sharpness that suggests salad with vinaigrette. Doesn't click, really. Imported by Kysela Père et Fils. —M.S.

80 Casa Lapostolle 2009 Casa Sauvignon Blanc (Rapel Valley); \$11.

Dull pear and papaya aromas are not very Sauvignon-like, and the mouth is both flat and spritzy, creating a "go figure" type of reaction. Flavors of banana and papaya are weak and bitter. Frankly, this just isn't good SB. Imported by Moët Hennessy USA. —M.S.

CORRECTION

In the November issue, the geographical designation of this wine was incorrect. We regret the error. Here is the correct review:



87 Biltmore 2008 Reserve Chardonnay (Napa Valley); \$20. This is one of the drier Chardonnays out there. You won't find fat, opulent, tropical fruit, but something more akin to Chablis. The flavors are of minerals and dried herbs, with background notes of pineapples, pears and oak.

Spirits

MEZCAL SMOKE AND SPICE

What's in the box?" asked the woman on the train, unable to resist the "adults only" sticker on the side of the case. "Mezcal," I replied. "Oh," she said, nodding. "The drink with the worm."

"The worm" is all many know about mezcal (sometimes spelled as "mescal"). It's not a well-known or a well-loved spirit. For those accustomed to the smooth tones of Scotch or the sweetness of liqueurs, the rough-and-tumble nature of mezcal can be disarming.

But the notoriously smoky, spicy agave-based liquid is slowly finding fans, as bartenders have been mixing it into drinks and promoting mezcal to adventurous imbibers right alongside its cousin Tequila.

Like Tequila, mezcal is a Mexican distillate of the agave plant, although it's specifically made in one of the seven mezcal-producing states in Mexico, the best-known of which is Oaxaca. While mezcal can be made from any number of varieties of agave, the vast proportion uses the espadin agave. The agave pina (heart) is also usually

roasted in stone pits, giving it a smoky character.

Which brings us to the delightfully diverse flavors found in mezcal. Sometimes, the agave lends a faint honey-like sweetness. But most often, smoke and an exciting, peppery spice are the dominant flavors. However, the expression can be mellowed with age, and just as with Tequila, mezcal is found in silver/joven (young), gold/reposado (rested, or slightly aged) and anejo (aged) varieties. As a result, some older mezcals have oak-inspired vanilla or caramel tones reminiscent of barrel-aged whiskies.

And as for the worm? Forget about it. Allegedly, worms once were used to help draw out impurities from the spirit—a function now performed much more effectively by the distillation process. And should you find one, consuming it won't make for hallucinations, since the agave plant is *not* related to the peyote cactus, the source of the hallucinatory drug mescaline. Sorry to debunk that colorful myth, but that's just the way the worm turns.

—KARA NEWMAN

94 Chichicapa Cask (Del Maguey, Ltd. Co., Oaxaca, Mexico); 47.8% abv, \$NA. If "sipping mezcal" doesn't exist, the category may have to be created for this limited-edition mezcal (only 14 three-bottle sets were produced). This "single village" mezcal is aged for 14 years in glass bottles and then is finished in a Stags Leap Cabernet barrel for 43 days. The result is a light nut-brown color and offers beautiful aromas of raisin, vanilla and dark chocolate, with a mellow pepper note in the background. Sweet agave nectar and honey flavors finish with a muted peppery sting.

92 San Luis del Rio (Del Maguey, Ltd. Co., Oaxaca, Mexico); 48.3% abv, \$70. A classic unaged mezcal: clear, with fresh, grassy aromas of green chile pepper and a slight whiff of smoke. The flavors reflect sweet and fruity, then spicy and smoky, finishing with spicy anise and alcohol burn. A fine base for a citrusy cocktail.

91 Crema de Mezcal (Del Maguey, Ltd. Co., Oaxaca, Mexico); 40.3% abv, \$45. Mezcal with agave syrup turns out to be lovely and drinkable. Despite the smoky, spicy,

vegetal, and only faintly caramel aromas, the flavor is surprisingly sweet. Deep raisin and honey/agave nectar notes give way to a lively clove and pepper finish. Light straw color, viscous feel, medium body.

90 Sombra (Sombra, Oaxaca, Mexico); 45% abv, \$45. Beneath an edgy Hell's Angel-esque black-and-silver label, the clear liquid gives off aromas of jalapeno, green bell pepper and a sun-warmed savory-sweetness that hints at ripe tomatoes. A slightly sweet flavor quickly gives way to a pleasant hot pepper singe and just enough alcohol for balance. Silky feel on the tongue, medium body. Outstanding for a Bloody Mary or other tomato-based cocktail.

89 Santo Domingo Albarradas (Del Maguey, Ltd. Co., Oaxaca, Mexico); 49.1% abv, \$70. Another single-village mezcal from Del Maguey. This crystal-clear mezcal has not much aroma, just a spicy scent which later opens up to a faint, grassy sweetness. Vegetal, grassy, slightly sweet flavors finish dry and pleasant, with just a little spice. Light body, unctuous feel.

THE WINE ENTHUSIAST SPIRITS BUYING GUIDE

The Spirits Buying Guide is a summary of recent detailed evaluations and product ratings of a single reviewer, Spirits Reviewer Kara Newman. Every tasting note is accompanied by a rating. Also noted are the full name of the product, its alcoholic strength expressed as percent alcohol by volume, the producer's name, and the suggested U.S. retail price. If the price cannot be confirmed, an \$NA (not available) will be printed. Prices are for 750-ml bottle unless otherwise indicated.

TASTING METHODOLOGY AND GOALS

Tastings are conducted individually in a controlled tasting environment. Spirits are tasted alone; no formal reviews are ever conducted in the presence of any producer or industry representative. Samples are tasted blind in flights of no more than six to eight products. Price is not a factor in the evaluation.

ABOUT THE SCORES

Beyond the rating, we encourage you to read the accompanying tasting note to learn about each spirit's special characteristics. The numerical ratings correspond to quality in the following manner:

- 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.

Spirits receiving a rating below 80 are not reviewed.

Certain spirits are designated as **Best Buys**. Spirits earning this designation offer a high level of quality in relation to price. There are no specific guidelines or formulae for determining Best Buys.

SUBMITTING SPIRITS FOR REVIEW

Spirits should be submitted to the following reviewing location: Kara Newman c/o 36 West 20th St, 3rd Floor, New York, NY, 10011. Inquiries should be addressed to Spirits Reviewer Kara Newman at spirits@WineEnthusiast.net. **There is no charge for submitting spirits**, and *Wine Enthusiast* will make every effort to sample all spirits submitted for review. There is, however, no guarantee that all submissions will be tasted, or that reviews will appear in the magazine. All submissions must be accompanied by a submission form, which may be downloaded from our website. Please be sure to check the spirits tasting schedule prior to submitting samples.

LABELS

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89 Scorpion Mezcal Anejo 1 Year (Scorpion Mezcal SA de CV, Oaxaca, Mexico); 40% abv, \$65. Aging the spirit one full year in oak yields a muddy brown color as well as a powerfully Bourbon-like, caramel aroma, with hints of agave and pepper and cinnamon spice. The flavors also are sweet, with notes of vanilla, oak, tobacco and leather. A smooth, peppery finish reminds this is mezcal, not Bourbon after all. One revolting scorpion is revealed at the bottom of the bottle.

89 Scorpion Mezcal Reposado (Scorpion Mezcal SA de CV, Oaxaca, Mexico); 40% abv, \$45. This aged spirit has a light straw color, and an intriguing mix of smoky spice and caramel aromas. Allowed to sit, the caramel scent intensifies. The flavor starts as vaguely sweet and vanilla-like, with a soft feel on the tongue, then turns peppery, and finishes with anise and a strong alcohol bite. Despite two off-putting scorpions at the bottom of the bottle, a sophisticated approach to mezcal.

88 Minero (Del Maguey, Ltd. Co., Oaxaca, Mexico); 49.2% abv, \$70. Clear color and vegetal aromas of green pepper, green jalapeno, along with black pepper and a hint of smoke and dried oregano. A sweet, fruity flavor at first quickly unfolds to lots of smoke and jalapeno pepper, and a spicy, biting alcoholic finish. A bracing backbone for mixed drinks.

88 Illegal Joven Mezcal (Illegal Mezcal, Oaxaca, Mexico); 40% abv, \$54. This smooth, well-balanced mezcal seems unremarkable at first, but has a certain addictiveness. The clear color and sweet, vegetal, slightly smoky fragrance seems pleasant but ordinary. But the alluring honeyed pepper notes and silky mouthfeel bring you back for more.

88 Illegal Reposado Mezcal (Illegal Mezcal, Oaxaca, Mexico); 40% abv, \$68. Restrained, mellow, balanced, elegant—not something usually expected from the mezcal category. The aged mezcal has a light gold color and soft aromas—a whisper of pepper, a hint of smokiness, later opening to a big caramel scent. Peppery flavors and some agave sweetness finish with a sharp bite, which might mellow over ice.

88 Maria Mezcal Anejo (Destileria Dona Maria Chagoya, Oaxaca, Mexico); 40% abv, \$65. This mezcal retained more agave character compared to other anejos.

With a light amber color and a smoky, sweet honey scent, the flavor reflected agave sweetness reminiscent of maple syrup along with spicy clove notes and a faint green pepper, vegetal twang. Smooth, black peppery finish.

87 Illegal Anejo Mezcal (Illegal Mezcal, Oaxaca, Mexico); 40% abv, \$103. A pervasively peppery mezcal. Medium amber color and smooth feel. Chile pepper aroma with hint of vanilla and licorice, sweet and spicy flavor finishes peppery, with some caramel aftertaste.

86 Tobala (Del Maguey, Ltd. Co., Oaxaca, Mexico); 47.2% abv, \$125. This single-village mezcal made from wild mountain maguey (agave) has a clean, peppery flavor and high, sweet fragrance with a peppery zing.

85 Mezcalero Release #2 (Destileria los Danzantes, Oaxaca, Mexico); 48.1% abv, \$84. A brisk, even slightly raw, unaged mezcal that clears the sinuses. Clear color and astringent, super-smoky scent precede a faint agave-sweet flavor, then a big dose of pepper and spicy, lingering finish.

85 Scorpion Mezcal Anejo 5 Year (Scorpion Mezcal SA de CV, Oaxaca, Mexico); 40% abv, \$180. This limited-edition mezcal was aged for five years in oak. Perhaps the angel took more than his share, because this gave the perception of the most alcohol bite, though it was labeled at a mere 80 proof. The muddy brown liquid has a strong alcohol nose, as well as smoky and spicy notes balanced by a toffee-like fragrance. Very spicy and alcoholic flavor, finishing with caramel and anise, and again, harsh alcohol, so much that it burns. Elegantly packaged in a curved glass bottle with one inelegant scorpion at the bottom.

85 Vida (Del Maguey, Ltd. Co., Oaxaca, Mexico); 42% abv, \$36. This clear and light-bodied mezcal has a faintly smoky aroma and a mildly peppery flavor. A potent, alcoholic finish fades into black pepper.

84 Fidencio Mezcal Joven “sin humo” (Fabrica de Mezcal del Amigos, Oaxaca, Mexico); 40% abv, \$45. This clear, delicate, almost gin-like mezcal is the debut offering from Fidencio, and the “con humo” (with smoke) and aged versions could prove very interesting with this unusual base. This light-bodied

product has pepper and overripe pineapple aromas, a soft feel and a faintly floral/menthol flavor with a light, peppery finish. It’s not very flavorful, but intriguing nevertheless.

84 Felino Reposado (Escorpion La Estanzuela, Zacatecas, Mexico); 40% abv, \$33. A slightly aged, light amber mezcal with a good give-and-take of raw agave flavors and the softening influence of the barrel. Assertive aromas of caramel and spicy pepper, in equal measure. Agave, honey, and pepper flavors, with a long anise and oaky finish disrupted by a too-hot alcohol bite.

84 Scorpion Mezcal Silver (Scorpion Mezcal SA de CV, Oaxaca, Mexico); 40% abv, \$38. This clear liquid has an overwhelmingly fruity pineapple-and-pepper scent, like a flavored vodka. Oddly overripe sweetness, then a spicy/peppery finish on the tongue and a strong alcohol burn. I could see this adding zing to cocktails made with tropical or exotic fruits.

83 Oro de Oaxaca Mezcal (Licorera Oaxaquena SA de CV, Oaxaca, Mexico); 40% abv, \$29 Oro means “gold,” though the liquid appears more of a pale straw than golden. Not much aroma, slight green pepper. Smoky, complex flavor, vegetal notes. Pleasantly warm, slightly oily feel. Not much of a finish—some pepper & tannic pucker. This was the only mezcal to arrive with a worm in the bottom of the bottle, which resembles a tiny turd.

83 Maria Mezcal Reposado (Destileria Dona Maria Chagoya, Oaxaca, Mexico); 40% abv, \$45 Light golden color, thin body. This aged mezcal has an intensely sweet, caramel aroma with dissonant pepper and pine notes. The flavors are piny and smoky, with a peppery, dry finish.

82 Pechuga (Del Maguey, Ltd. Co., Oaxaca, Mexico); 49.4% abv, \$200. This expensive, triple-distilled single-village mezcal is a bartender favorite, but I just don’t understand why. The scent on this clear liquid was reminiscent of pizza with smoked mozzarella: tomato, black pepper and oregano, and light smoke. But the flavors reflected none of this. Instead, it had distinctive and intense licorice and petrol-like flavors, like ouzo without any sweetness and a faintly peppery, astringent finish. Oily, viscous feel.

Beer

INTO THE WOODS

Many of the readers of this magazine understand the importance that oak plays in the world of wine. From different equipment choices (size of barrels, staves, chips) to varying sourcing regions and toast levels, there are so many ways that the oak a winemaker chooses can affect the end result of his or her vintage.

Aging in oak is nothing new in the brewing world, either, but it's certainly seen a resurgence over the past couple of years. Brewers are hot on the trend, with wood being snagged from almost anyplace they can imagine. From Bourbon and whiskey barrels to Madeira casks to used French

wine barrels, brewers are looking to add increased depth and complexity to their brews through the use of wood aging wherever they can find it, experimenting just like winemakers with the different sourcing, size, age and toast options to find the optimal vessel to hold their brews.

This month we have a wide assortment of wood-aged beer styles reviewed for your consideration. Depending on your personal preferences, not all these beers will hold equal appeal for you, but their overall complexity and depth of character coupled with achieved balance make them excellent examples so you can experience wood aging done right.

Prost!

—LAUREN BUZZEO

96 Russian River Temptation Blonde Ale Aged in Oak Barrels (American Wild Ale; Russian River Brewing Co, CA); 7.25% abv, \$12/375 ml. This is a Belgian-style Blonde Ale aged in French oak Chardonnay barrels with brettanomyces for twelve months. Pours a slightly hazy gold color with a pillowy white head and good retention. Wild citrus and hay notes dominate the bouquet along with accents of barnyard and sour green grape. The mouth is full and creamy but acidic and lively, like a fine Champagne. Tart citrus and green gooseberry flavors flood the palate with a touch of ripe white cranberry lingering through the long finish. Refreshing, remarkably vibrant and beautifully balanced.

95 Allagash Curieux Ale Aged in Oak Bourbon Barrels (Tripel; Allagash Brewing, ME); 11% abv, \$15/750 ml. Curieux (French for curious) is a Belgian Tripel Ale aged in Jim Beam barrels for eight weeks. Introduced in 2004, this is the June 2010 bottling, for which 825 cases were produced. The nose is loaded with spice, citrus, banana and sour stone fruit with vanilla accents. Big and weighty in the mouth with a lush roundness provided by the elevated abv. While the alcohol is noticeable it's balanced by peppery spice and Bourbon notes mingling with stone fruit flavors. The moderate effervescence lightens the intense profile, leading through to a clean but lingering finish.

94 Port Brewing Older Viscosity (American Strong Ale; Port Brewing Co., CA); 12.0% abv; \$15/375 ml. The

appearance is almost shocking with its ink-black color, tar-like viscosity and intense bouquet. Melted milk chocolate and Bourbon-infused oak waft from the glass like a torched s'more, with hints of molasses, leather and malted milk following. The mouth is as intense as one would expect yet smooth and velvety, and though it's boozy it's remarkably balanced with rich roasted espresso and cocoa flavors. After the mocha subsides, the Bourbon takes center stage but then leads through to flavors of whoppers, licorice, dried cherries and raisins that linger on the finish.

93 Full Sail Top Sail Bourbon Barrel Aged Porter (American Porter; Full Sail Brewing Co, OR); 9.85% abv, \$10/22 oz. Part of the Brewmaster Reserve line of beers from Full Sail. Aged for about ten months in Bourbon casks from Kentucky, there's no shortage of aromas or flavors here with loads of dark chocolate, Bourbon, oak and vanilla in the nose and mouth. Deep black in color with a roasted malt backbone and a glimmer of hop astringency on the back to keep it all balanced and the richness in check. The finish is endless and the beer is quite drinkable despite the high abv.

93 Samuel Smith's Yorkshire Stingo (English Strong Ale; Samuel Smith Old Brewery, England); 8.0% abv, \$13/550 ml. Aged in old cask-conditioned ale barrels for over one year after fermentation in Yorkshire Squares, this beer has a subtle complexity for a less over-the-top woodiness and refined character than other oak-aged brews. The aromas are typical for

THE WINE ENTHUSIAST BEER BUYING GUIDE

The Beer Buying Guide is a summary of recent detailed evaluations and product ratings of a single reviewer, Assistant Tasting Director Lauren Buzzee. Every tasting note is accompanied by a rating. Also noted are the full name of the product, beer style, alcoholic strength expressed as percent alcohol by volume, producer's name, and the suggested/average U.S. retail price. If price cannot be confirmed, an \$NA (not available) will be printed. Prices are for the bottle size or packaging indicated.

TASTING METHODOLOGY AND GOALS

Formal evaluation sessions occur in a professional tasting room. Beers are tasted alone; no formal reviews are ever conducted in the presence of any producer or industry representative. Samples are tasted blind in flights of no more than six products; the category being reviewed may or may not be divulged. Price is not a factor in the evaluation.

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an English old ale: sweet dark fruit, brown bread, caramel and oak, and the flavors are similarly intense with additional notes of dried dates, raisins and toffee. Medium weight with soft carbonation but exceptional balance, producing a sweet but not cloying drinking experience.

93 The Lost Abbey Framboise de Amorosa (American Wild Ale; Port Brewing Co., CA); 7.0% abv, \$15/375 ml.

A newer release that's aged in oak barrels with raspberries, this is a great choice for wine lovers and serious beer enthusiasts with prominent wild yeast aromas and robust fruit flavors. Aromas of raspberry sauce, butter, cocoa and oaky spice fill the bouquet. The mouthfeel is silky and medium bodied with light carbonation, but the assertive acidity and tart raspberry flavors keep things lively and interesting. Definitely sour but well balanced and very food-friendly.

92 Founders Brewing Curmudgeon Old Ale (Old Ale; Founders Brewing Company, MI); 9.8% abv, \$12/12 oz 4 pack.

Brewed with molasses and then oak-aged, this is a balanced but strong beer perfect for those cold winter nights. Dark amber in the glass with great glimmers of red throughout. It smells rich and a bit warm with notes of caramel sauce, honeycomb, maple syrup, dried apricot and a hint of resin. The mouth is fairly heavy with a slight slickness to it. The dominating roastiness and sweet oak flavors are accented by soft hop bitters.

92 Uinta Crooked Line Series Labyrinth Black Ale (American Double/Imperial Stout; Uinta Brewing Co., UT); 13.2% abv, \$12/750 ml.

At a whopping 13.2%, you'd think you're in for a brute of a beer, but this Imperial Stout brewed with licorice sticks and aged in oak barrels is one beautifully balanced and ageworthy selection. Black as night with an attractive nose of dark stone fruit, chocolate, roasted espresso beans, licorice, charred grain and vanilla. The aromas carry through to the mouth, where the toasted malt and nutty oak dominate the sweeter attributes of caramel sauce and burnt toffee. Creamy and robust with a slightly viscous feel, low carbonation and a lingering tannic bitterness on the close. **ME**