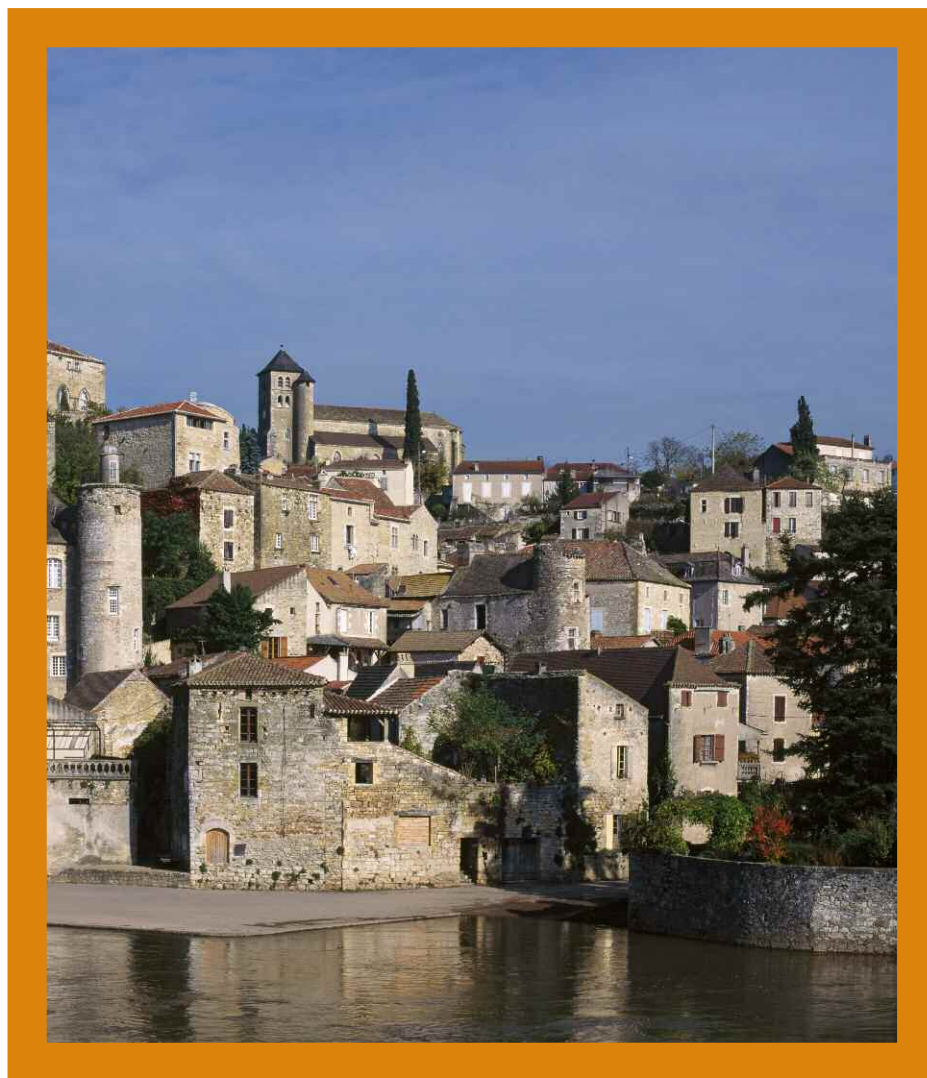




Buying Guide



The picturesque village of Puy-L'Évêque, in the Cahors region of southwest France.

Special Advance Release

**Wines reviewed for the February 2010 issue,
in home January 7**

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pithy. Eminently drinkable white wine from Spain. Imported by Fine Estates From Spain. —M.S.

87 Abad Dom Bueno 2008 Godello (Bierzo); \$18. Much more fresh and perky than previous years, with grapefruit, nectarine and other citrusy aromas. Pink grapefruit is without doubt the lead player in terms of flavor, and otherwise it's simply a tight, citric wine with scour and poise. Drink now. Imported by Frontier Wine Imports. —M.S.

85 Gancedo 2008 Capricho Val de Paxariñas Godello (Bierzo); \$24. A little dusty and spicy on the nose, with pear and apple checking in. The palate has spritz and acidity, while the flavors run sweet with ripe apple, pineapple and tropical fruit. Tastes like orange candy on the finish, with a sugary lasting impression. Good but needs more balance and harmony. Imported by The Artisan Collection. —M.S.

OTHER WHITE WINE

87 Esperanza 2008 Verdejo-Viura (Rueda); \$15. A clean, almost oceanic opening is fresh and citrusy as it should be, while the palate shows pulse, balance and a little scour to go with orange, grapefruit and other citrusy flavors. Pithy and biting late, with ample fruit throughout. Imported by Axial Wines USA. —M.S.

ROSÉ WINES

87 Borsao 2008 Rosé (Campo de Borja); \$8. One of Spain's top value-oriented rosés. It's inviting, colorful, easy to understand and tasty. Aromas of fresh fruits and melon get it going, while the palate is clean, fresh, only mildly candied and full of cherry and red plum flavors. Scores high by keeping it simple. Drink ASAP. Imported by Fine Estates From Spain. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

86 Viña Vilano 2008 Rosado (Ribera del Duero); \$12. An improvement from recent years, but that may be a reflection of when we're tasting the wine. At this point in time it's showing dusty plum and raspberry aromas and good body weight. The flavors of raspberry and cherry are solid, while the finish is cleansing. Beyond palatable; it's really a nice rosé from

Tempranillo. Imported by Johnson Brothers Liquor Company. —M.S.

85 Ilurce 2008 Rosado (Rioja); \$10. Reddish in color, with raspberry and other high-toned aromas. The palate is fleshy but clean, with good acidity pushing slightly sweet cherry and raspberry flavors. Finishes with sugar and a good mouthfeel. Gets the job done. Imported by Fine Estates From Spain. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

83 Muga 2008 Rosé (Rioja); \$12. After many years of singing the praises of Muga's rosé, this vintage seems lacking and sour. The nose is short and quiet, while the palate delivers lean, citric flavors and a sharp, scouring finish. Whets the whistle, but doesn't put a smile on your face. Imported by Fine Estates From Spain. —M.S.

CALIFORNIA

PINOT NOIR

100 Williams Selyem 2007 Litton Estate Vineyard Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); \$100. A spectacular Pinot Noir, but a very young one, and extremely dry. It's a wine of great structure, with rich acids and tannins framing extraordinarily complex flavors of grilled cherries, strawberries and raspberries, with complicating notes of cola, pomegranates, orange zest, anise, dusty Asian spices and smoky sandalwood. A truly great Pinot Noir from a great vintage that needs time in the bottle to express itself. The vineyard, which is owned by the winery, is only 19 acres, planted to an array of newer and older clones. Best after 2013, if you can keep your hands off. —S.H.

98 Williams Selyem 2007 Precious Mountain Vineyard Pinot Noir (Sonoma Coast); \$90. Ripe and delicious right out of the bottle, although it will age well. Made from a vineyard on the true Sonoma Coast, in the remote Fort Ross area, it's fabulously rich in cherry, framboise and red currant flavors, with intriguing waves of anise, bacon and sweet, vanilla-scented smoky sandalwood. There's a foresty taste, too, suggesting dried pine needles. The tannins and acids are near perfect. Stunning now, and should hold for at least six years. —S.H.

97 Williams Selyem 2007 Hirsch Vineyard Pinot Noir (Sonoma Coast); \$72. A brilliant wine. Racy in acidity, silky in texture, yet powerful, it exudes the essence of Pinot Noir's greatness. Shows great fruity ripeness in the cherry, Dr. Pepper cola, licorice and bacon flavors, and also a wild, forest quality of grilled mushrooms, thyme and fennel. Absolutely dry, with a firm spine of tannins, the structure is near perfect. A divine expression of Hirsch, and a good candidate for six years in the cellar. **Cellar Selection.** —S.H.

97 Williams Selyem 2007 Rochioli Riverblock Vineyard Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); \$75. Always one of Williams Selyem's top Pinot Noirs, the 2007 is a spectacular wine. The vines are the closest to the river in the famed Rochioli vineyard, and the resulting wine always has an elegant structure and fruity accessibility that make it drinkable at a younger age. Showing rich flavors of cherries, red currants, cola, bacon, anise, Asian spices and smoky oak, it will develop beautifully over the next decade. —S.H.

97 Williams Selyem 2007 Allen Vineyard Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); \$78. Not showing well now due to the tannins. It's dry and tough, with a resistance to the richness. Yet the core of flavor is enormous. Shows concentrated, flashy flavors of cherry marmalade, raspberry, orange blossom, cola, licorice, rose tea and spices that go on and on and continue to develop in the glass. The texture is pure silk and satin. Needs 4–6 years to develop, and could go beyond that. **Cellar Selection.** —S.H.

96 Chronicle 2007 Cerise Vineyard Pinot Noir (Anderson Valley); \$48. The vineyard is about 1,000 feet above Boonville. The wine is impeccable. Crisp in acidity, with a silky, elegant texture, it shows complex flavors of cherries, raspberries, cola, orange zest, Asian spices and earthy rhubarb. It's dry, but with a rich, fruity-oaky sweetness. Delicious and compelling, it should develop over the next 6–8 years. —S.H.

95 Williams Selyem 2007 Vista Verde Vineyard Pinot Noir (San Benito County); \$54. The winery's best Vista Verde ever. Terrific in crisp acidity and finely meshed tannins that frame ripe, rich flavors of cherry pulp, root beer, anise and oak that finish long and impressively delicious. Complex and compelling



now, and will develop in the bottle over the next 6–8 years. **Cellar Selection.** —S.H.

95 Williams Selyem 2007 Bucher Vineyard Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); \$54. Forward and delicious, a vibrant wine that's fully drinkable now for the richness of fruit. Shows ripe waves of black and red cherries, raspberries, cola, chocolate and crème brûlée, leading to a long, sweetly spicy finish. Seems destined to be an early drinker, so best now and through 2012. —S.H.

95 Williams Selyem 2007 Peay Vineyard Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); \$54. Pretty tannic, with a hard edge, although it's very fruity and rich, and should soften and mellow with time in the cellar. Thoroughly dry, it shows complex flavors of wild raspberries, cherry compote, cola and spices, compounded with smoky, sweet oak. Give it until 2011 to begin to come around. **Cellar Selection.** —S.H.

94 WesMar 2007 Hellenthal Vineyard Pinot Noir (Sonoma Coast); \$50. Here's a young, dry, acidic Pinot Noir that clearly wants some time in the cellar. It has a beautifully silky texture, and is made in a light, elegant style, with very complex flavors. Waves of sour red cherry candy and cola flavors wash over the palate, accented with orange zest, cinnamon, Asian spices, anise and sandalwood. Better after 2011 and should develop for 3–5 years after that. **Cellar Selection.** —S.H.

94 Williams Selyem 2007 Flax Vineyard Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); \$54. Despite firm tannins and tough acidity this wine is so rich and silky, you can drink it now, with decanting. It floods the mouth with raspberries, cherries, chocolate, anise, cinnamon spice and sweet oak. Absolutely delicious, with a silky, seductive mouthfeel. Although it's the least expensive of Williams Selyem's new releases, it's right up there. —S.H.

94 Williams Selyem 2007 Ferrington Vineyard Pinot Noir (Anderson Valley); \$62. A wonderful wine from one of the best vineyards in Anderson Valley. It's a bit acidic and tannic now, the result of this cool vintage, but time in the bottle should soften and resolve the tartness and astringency. The wine itself is very dry, with flavors of cherries, cola, balsam, Asian spices and oak. Needs aging through at

least 2012 to awaken it. **Cellar Selection.** —S.H.

93 WesMar 2007 Pinot Noir (Sonoma Coast); \$35. Dry, silky and complex, this Pinot is as good as WesMar's more costly single-vineyard Pinots, which makes it a great value. It shows great structural integrity, with crisp acids and fine tannins that house exotic flavors of cherry compote, Dr. Pepper cola, orange zest, Canadian bacon and Asian spices. Now–2013. **Editors' Choice.** —S.H.

93 WesMar 2007 Balletto Vineyard Pinot Noir (Sonoma Coast); \$40. Give this beauty 3–4 years in the cellar, and if you can't, at least decant it for hours before serving. It's a beautiful young Pinot Noir, very dry and as silky as satin in the mouth, showing ripe, oak-inspired flavors of cherries, raspberries, cocoa, cola and spices. Shows the elegant acidity and structure of this wonderful vintage on the Sonoma Coast. **Cellar Selection.** —S.H.

93 Williams Selyem 2007 Coastlands Vineyard Pinot Noir (Sonoma Coast); \$69. This is one of the darkest of Williams Selyem's new Pinots and also one of the ripest. It's jammy in the intensity of raspberry and cherry fruit, with a savory, Dr. Pepper cola richness. The spiciness, which is one of winemaker Bob Cabral's specialties in capturing, is exotic. It's a big, fat, rich wine that needs decanting now, and should age for 4–6 years. **Cellar Selection.** —S.H.

92 McIntyre Vineyards 2007 Estate Pinot Noir (Santa Lucia Highlands); \$42. Starts out very full-bodied and rich, almost too heavy for Pinot Noir. Then the acids kick in to accent the silky texture, and you know it's a ripe, ageable Pinot Noir. With deep flavors of raspberries, cherries, red currants, licorice, cocoa and peppery spices, it should develop well over the next 4–6 years. **Cellar Selection.** —S.H.

92 Williams Selyem 2007 Weir Vineyard Pinot Noir (Yorkville Highlands); \$56. Shows lots of acidity and also the firm tannins and tug of dried herbs that always accompany this bottling. Quite good, with fruity flavors of cherries, raspberries, currants and cola, but feels a little rustic. Could harmonize over the next 6–8 years. —S.H.

91 Baileyana 2007 La Entrada Pinot Noir (Edna Valley); \$33. Considerably riper than Baileyana's other Pinots. It shows in the richer, softer mouthfeel and deeper flavors. The red cherries veer toward blackberries, yet the texture remains silky and dry. New oak, as always, is judiciously applied. Delicious now, and should develop over the next 3–4 years. —S.H.

91 WesMar 2007 Salzgeber Vineyard Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); \$50. Dry and silky, a very proper Pinot Noir from this fine, cool vintage. It's marked in youth by brisk acids and forward, somewhat one-dimensional flavors of cherries, cola and spices, with the smoky sandalwood of barrel age. Could develop all kinds of surprises over the next 4–6 years. —S.H.

91 WesMar 2007 Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); \$35. A beautiful, fine young Pinot Noir that shows off the WesMar style of crisp elegance at a lower price than their single-vineyard wines. Dry and silky, it feels fine in the mouth, offering rich flavors of cherries, cola and sweet, smoky oak. Now–2012. —S.H.

90 Baileyana 2007 S-bar Pinot Noir (Edna Valley); \$50. This seems to be a bottling of some of the best blocks from the winery's Firepeak estate vineyard. Although it's modest in alcohol and quite acidic, it's richer and deeper than Baileyana's El Pico Pinot, with waves of cherries, cola, rhubarb and spice. Should develop bottle complexity over the next 3–5 years. —S.H.

90 Chronicle 2007 Pinot Noir (Sonoma Coast); \$35. A classy Pinot Noir that shows the attributes of its vintage and origin. The grapes come from the cooler, southern part of Russian River Valley, and the wine displays brisk acidity and complex flavors of cherries, pomegranates and cola. It's young now, but dry and elegant, and should develop bottle complexity through 2013. —S.H.

90 Gainey 2007 Limited Selection Pinot Noir (Sta. Rita Hills); \$48. Very rich and ripe, with masses of cherries, red currants and mocha that finish thoroughly dry and spicy. Full-bodied, too, almost like Grenache. Quite good, but a bit ungainly in youth. Needs a few years in the bottle. 2010–2013. —S.H.



89 A Donkey and Goat 2007 Syrah (Mendocino); \$20. A very nice Syrah that shows plenty of upscale character. While it's not as complex as the winery's vineyard-designated Syrahs, it shows a rich tannin structure and ripe blackberry, anise, chocolate and pepper flavors. Will drink well for the next couple years. *Editors' Choice.* —S.H.

88 Brander 2008 Syrah (Santa Ynez Valley); \$22. A polished, pretty Syrah. It's black in color and very soft, and tastes like a blackberry- and blueberry-infused chocolate drink, with hints of bacon. Luscious and ready to drink now. —S.H.

88 Brander 2008 Clover Creek Vineyard Syrah (Santa Barbara County); \$20. Like pepper in your Syrahs? This one's for you. It's distinctly Californian, in the superripe blackberry, currant and chocolate flavors. The appealing softness suggests drinking now. —S.H.

87 Cuvaison 2007 Syrah (Carneros); \$32. Rather heavy and super-fruity now, with fruitstand flavors of blackberries, cherries and plums. It's a ripely delicious wine, but a bit one-dimensional, not showing much elegance or subtlety. Could develop bottle nuance over the next 4–6 years. —S.H.

87 Forth 2005 La Rousse Vineyard Syrah (Dry Creek Valley); \$24. This single-vineyard Syrah is dry and elegantly structured. It pleases for its rich mouthfeel and layers of blackberry, currant, licorice, bacon, pepper and cedar flavors. At its best now and for a few more years. —S.H.

87 Manzanita Creek 2007 De Luxe Syrah (Sonoma Coast); \$27. A tough, rugged, tannic young wine, brisk in acids and pepper, and not showing much opulence now. There's a molten core of blackberries and grilled, meaty leather, leading to a bone dry finish. Should mellow with 1–2 years in the bottle. —S.H.

87 Three Coins 2007 Betsy's Vineyard Syrah (Knights Valley); \$28. A pretty good Syrah. It's a bit rugged and rustic, with edgy tannins accented with a peppery mouthfeel, but it's dry and full-bodied, with fairly complex flavors of blackberries, black currants and leather. Drink now. —S.H.

86 Jalama 2006 Paradise Road Syrah (Santa Barbara County); \$30. A dry, tannic and severe Syrah. It's tart and sandpapery in the mouth, with a scoury mouthfeel, and although you'll find some cherries and currants, there's not enough richness to counterbalance the toughness. —S.H.

86 Jalama 2006 La Presa Syrah (Santa Barbara County); \$30. A bit aggressive in tannins, with a sharp, sandpapery bite, and the flavors don't give enough richness to balance that roughness. Still, it's a well-structured, dry wine, with pleasant blackberry, blueberry, herb and tobacco flavors. Drink now. —S.H.

86 Paraiso Vineyards 2004 Syrah (Santa Lucia Highlands); \$20. Very dry and fairly tannic, with interesting flavors of cherries, currants and licorice, and an earthy-tobacco note. The finish is very peppery. It's a solid, good wine with some extra qualities of elegance and depth. —S.H.

86 Scheid Vineyards 2006 Syrah (Monterey); \$24. Very dry and peppery-spicy, with firm tannins. Shows juvenile, primary fruit flavors of cherries, blackberries and dark, unsweetened baker's chocolate. Could gain some elegance with a year or so in the bottle. —S.H.

85 Calcareous 2007 Twisted Sisters Syrah (Paso Robles); \$28. A bit tough and gritty in tannin structure, with sweetly jammy flavors of raspberries, cherries and red plums, accented with smoky oak. Seems at its best now. —S.H.

85 Terry Hoage 2007 The Hedge Syrah (Paso Robles); \$48. A bit hot in alcohol, and glycerine gives a sugary-sweet edge to the blackberries, black cherries and oak. There might even be some residual sugar. If you like your reds soft and on the sweet side, and lots of people do, it's for you. —S.H.

83 B Cellars 2006 Syrah (Napa Valley); \$45. Heavy and tannic and rather dull now, and overripe, too. Shows blackberry jam, chocolate and currant flavors that veer into stewed prunes. Drink now. —S.H.

82 Lucas & Lewellen 2006 Syrah (Santa Barbara County); \$26. Dull and vegetal, with modest cherry flavors. But the texture is smooth and the finish is dry. —S.H.

82 Oak Grove 2008 Reserve Shiraz (California); \$8. Harsh and jammy, with thin flavors of cherries and pepper, accompanied by sharp acids. Okay in a pinch. —S.H.

PETITE SIRAH

91 Kokomo 2007 Petite Sirah (Dry Creek Valley); \$27. The Yiddish word "zaftig" perfectly describes this Petite Sirah. It's big, powerful and fleshy, with potent flavors of blackberries, cherries, plums, currants, dark chocolate, licorice, bacon and peppery spices, all wrapped into significant tannins. A very nice example of the variety, it's dry and balanced, and should age for years. —S.H.

86 Barra 2004 Petite Sirah (Mendocino); \$22. Sweet and rich in fruit and smoky oak, with thick tannins and the rustic mouthfeel of a youthful Petite Sirah. The flavors are of jammy blackberries, cherries, leather, coffee and black pepper. Should age for a long time without necessarily gaining elegance. —S.H.

83 Glen Ellen 2007 Reserve Petite Sirah (California); \$10/1.5 L. Full-bodied, dry and robust, with flavors of berries, leather, tobacco and spices. It's a rustic, tannic wine, but this is a decent price for a double bottle. *Best Buy.* —S.H.

80 Oak Grove 2008 Reserve Petite Sirah (California); \$8. Simple, soft and dull, with vegetal aromas and flavors that barely suggest cherries. —S.H.

ZINFANDEL

94 Williams Selyem 2007 Papera Vineyard Zinfandel (Russian River Valley); \$48. The 2007 vintage was a fabulous one for Williams Selyem across all varieties, and the Zinfandels were winners for the cool, balanced growing season. The Papera is a big, rich, jammy wine, but also a drily elegant one. It offers waves of raspberry, Fig Newton, red currant and Canadian bacon flavors, with superfine tannins. A beautiful, exuberant Zinfandel that's wonderful



now and for the next six years. *Editors' Choice.* —S.H.

93 Black Sears 2006 Zinfandel (Howell Mountain); \$42. The vineyard has been source to extraordinary Zinfandels from other producers, such as Howell Mountain Vineyards and D-Cubed. Now here it is under its own brand. It's a wonderful Zinfandel, powerful and complex, yet dry and elegant. The tannins are strong, but finely ground, and the raspberry, cherry, red currant, cola and Asian spice flavors are luscious. Drink now and through 2012. —S.H.

93 Williams Selyem 2007 Forchini Vineyard Zinfandel (Russian River Valley); \$48. A big, boldly powerful but elegant Zinfandel, full-bodied in the mouth and dry, offering waves of ripe fruits and spices. The cool 2007 vintage has kept the wine from being too ripe, resulting in balanced flavors of blackberries, currants, licorice, bacon, cocoa, black pepper and Asian spices. Just terrific. Drink over the next six years. —S.H.

92 Ottimino Vineyards 2006 Von Weidlich Vineyard Zinfandel (Russian River Valley); \$36. This is the driest, most elegant and balanced of Ottimino's new single-vineyard Zinfandels. It has a Cabernet-like structure, although the wild blackberry, mulberry, plum and exotic spice flavors are all Zin, as are the dense, sandpapery tannins. Good now with upscale rich beef and cheese dishes, and should develop gradually in the bottle for many years. —S.H.

90 Ottimino Vineyards 2006 Rancho Bello Vineyard Zinfandel (Russian River Valley); \$26. A wildly flavored, tannic and exuberant Zinfandel that showcases the variety's exotic personality. Dry and full-bodied, it has brambly flavors of blackberries, black currants, licorice, mocha and smoky cedar, liberally sprinkled with dusty Asian spices. Drink now–2013. —S.H.

90 Titus 2007 Zinfandel (Napa Valley); \$27. Delicious and succulent, a gigantic Zinfandel. Impresses for the powerful ripeness of the blackberry, plum and cherry fruit, accented with waves of smoky wood, cocoa and Asian spices. The tannins are rich and strong. Will age for a long time, gradually losing density and becoming softer and sweeter. —S.H.

90 Z-52 2006 Truchard Vineyard Zinfandel (Napa Valley); \$24. Shows all the Zinny character you could want, with masses of wild forest berries, sweet red currants, licorice, bacon, smoky sandalwood and peppery spices. The pedigree comes in the dryness and the fine balance of tannins, acids and oak. A first-rate, upscale Zin. *Editors' Choice.* —S.H.

89 Ottimino Vineyards 2006 Ottomino Vineyard Zinfandel (Russian River Valley); \$32. This is a big, powerful Zinfandel. It's very strong in blackberry, blueberry, cocoa and peppery spice flavors, and also very tannic and dry. A dramatic wine, it will do well with barbecue and heavily spiced beef dishes. Should develop bottle age through 2013 or so. —S.H.

89 Rued 2006 Zinfandel (Dry Creek Valley); \$25. Very good Dry Creek Zin, robust and dry and spicy. Really gets the tastebuds watering, with its tart flavors of sour cherry candy, red currants, blueberries, tart raisins and oodles of peppery spices. Drink this lusty wine with barbecue. *Editors' Choice.* —S.H.

88 Hanna 2006 Bismark Mountain Vineyard Zinfandel (Sonoma Valley); \$65. Despite the "valley" appellation, this is one of the highest elevation vineyards in Sonoma County. It's a dense, tannic, concentrated wine, with a deep core of black currants, black pepper and chocolate. Zinfanatics will absolutely love it, but it's very high in alcohol, almost Port-like, although the finish is absolutely dry. —S.H.

88 Kokomo 2007 Zinfandel (Sonoma County); \$22. A lovely Zinfandel, soft and delicious. It has very ripe flavors of red cherries, red currants, raspberries, cocoa, anise and peppery spices, wrapped into rich, finely ground tannins. Drink now. —S.H.

88 Mazzocco 2007 West Dry Creek Zinfandel (Dry Creek Valley); \$32. Mazzocco's Zins are dependably superripe and high in alcohol. This '07 is a big, strong wine, offering flavors of blackberry and blueberry jam, spread onto buttered white toast and sprinkled with anisette. It's delicious and heady. —S.H.

88 Wilson 2007 Diane's Reserve Zinfandel (Dry Creek Valley); \$60. A big, soft, ultrarich style of Zinfandel. It has very

high alcohol, with flamboyant flavors of milk chocolate, oozingly ripe blackberries and blueberries, anise liqueur and black pepper. The finish is totally dry. Lusty and heady. —S.H.

87 Kokomo 2007 Perotti Vineyards Zinfandel (Dry Creek Valley); \$27. Very ripe. You can taste the sunshine in the blackberry, cherry, blueberry, mulberry and cocoa flavors. They burst in the mouth, carrying waves of spices and fruity acids through a spicy, slightly hot finish. At its best now. —S.H.

87 Peachy Canyon 2007 Mustang Springs Zinfandel (Paso Robles); \$36. Spicy and dry, this Zin offers flavors of currants, tobacco, pepper and cocoa. The tannins are thick, but acidity is low, giving it a soft mouthfeel. Could be more concentrated, but it's an elegant wine. —S.H.

87 Valley of the Moon 2007 Zinfandel (Sonoma County); \$16. A nice, smooth, rich Zinfandel that shows classic flavors at a fair price. It's fully dry, with rich, fine tannins and ripe flavors of berries, currants, dark chocolate, cola, cedar and lots of peppery spices. Good now with broiled steak, beef tacos, juicy burgers and Thai beef dishes. —S.H.

87 Wilson 2007 Tori Vineyard Zinfandel (Dry Creek Valley); \$32. A good, lusty Zinfandel to toss back with excellent barbecue and roasts. It's a big, full-bodied, fruity wine, packed with dry, tannic Zinny flavors of wild berries, beef jerky and crushed black pepper. Drink now. —S.H.

87 Z-52 2006 Zinfandel (Lodi); \$12. A great buy at this price for its richness and overall integrity. Has a medium body, with fine, fuzzy tannins and bone-dry, complex flavors of wild berries, currants, herbs, tobacco and tons of peppery spices. *Best Buy.* —S.H.

86 Mazzocco 2007 Maple Zinfandel (Dry Creek Valley); \$40. With more than 16% alcohol, this Zin has a hot mouthfeel, even for Dry Creek Zinfandel. Still, it's dry and smooth, with savory flavors of blackberry jam, chocolate, red and black currants, bacon and pepper. It's a good example of its type, and of Mazzocco's house style. —S.H.

86 Peachy Canyon 2007 Especial Zinfandel (Paso Robles); \$40. There's a musty aroma to this wine that detracts, and the



87 Road i Red NV Red Blend (Mendocino County); \$10. A really wonderful wine that's dry and robust and frankly super-drinkable. The producer, Weibel, doesn't tell us what the grapes are, but the wine is spicy and briary, with blackberry and cola flavors. Great as a by-the-glass pour. **Best Buy.** —S.H.

87 Terry Hoage 2007 5 Blocks (Paso Robles); \$48. Extremely high alcohol shows up as heat throughout, especially in the finish. That aside, this Rhône red blend has lots to like. It's dry and full-bodied and soft, with complex flavors of blackberries, currants, chocolate, leather, anise, black pepper and sandalwood. Drink now with rich meats and cheeses. —S.H.

87 Valley of the Moon 2007 Sangiovese (Sonoma County); \$16. Shows the high acidity, cherry flavors, silky texture and dryness you expect from this variety. It's not an especially complex wine, but a good, sound one that needs rich oils, cheeses and meats to balance the tartness. —S.H.

86 Scheid Vineyards 2007 Grenache (Monterey); \$21. Here's a dry, elegant Grenache for drinking now. It has a silky texture, with slightly rough tannins and flavors of cherry pie, anise, mocha, pepper and herbs. —S.H.

86 Terry Hoage 2007 The Pick (Paso Robles); \$40. Feels a bit one-dimensional now, showing fruit and oak sweetness and ripe, forward cherry pie and spice flavors. Could age, but the simple structure suggests otherwise. Drink this southern Rhône-style blend now. —S.H.

85 Mosby 2007 Dolcetto (Santa Barbara County); \$24. Very rich and ripe, a big, somewhat rustic wine that explodes in the mouth with the flavors of cherries, red currants, cocoa and sandalwood. The texture is silky, the finish dry. Drink this charming wine with rich beef dishes. —S.H.

85 Rivino 2006 Cabernet Franc (Mendocino); \$25. Good and brisk, if a bit one-dimensional, a tannic, crisply dry wine with flavors of cherries, herb tea, red currants, smoky sandalwood and spices. The astringency is not likely to soften with age. —S.H.

84 Calcareous 2007 Reserve Estate Mourvèdre (Paso Robles); \$42. Shows all the difficulties of succeeding with this

quirky variety in California. The problem isn't ripeness, because this wine brims with cherries and chocolate. Its limitation is structure. Badly needs firmness, elegance, dryness, acidity, lower alcohol. —S.H.

84 Jalama 2007 Camp 4 Mourvèdre (Santa Barbara County); \$30. A tough wine to like. Mourvèdre needs warmth, and this wine appears to have lacked enough of it to ripen. Shows an earthy, green herb and mint tug to the sweet oak and cherries. Drink now. —S.H.

84 Terry Hoage 2007 Skins Grenache (Paso Robles); \$38. A bit one-dimensional, with jammy red cherry pie filling flavors that taste sweet and glyceriney. Tasty, but cloyes after a few sips. Ready now. —S.H.

84 Fenestra NV True Red Lot 24 (California); \$11. A good, everyday red wine. It's a bit rugged and scoury, but dry, with flavors of cherries, herbs, tobacco and pepper. Nice with burritos. —S.H.

83 Castle Rock 2007 Petit Verdot (Monterey County); \$12. Dry and tannic, with flavors of cherries, herbs and tobacco. Not a lot going on, but this is a good price for a sturdy, full-bodied red wine. —S.H.

83 Cinnabar NV Lot 310 Philosopher's Stone (Paso Robles); \$32. A hard, tough, tannic and acidic wine. Not showing much charm, because the cherry-berry flavors, while dry, are swamped with astringency. Zinfandel and Teroldego. —S.H.

83 Jalama 2006 El Capitan (Santa Barbara County); \$30. Not quite ripe, with an herbal, almost vegetal taste that cuts across the cherries and red currants. Acidic and tannic, too. This hard, austere wine is unlikely to improve. —S.H.

83 Mosby 2006 Teroldego (Santa Barbara County); \$30. Strongly flavored and rustic in the mouth, with harsh, not quite ripe tannins framing jammy flavors of cherries, coffee and spice. This tough wine needs rich, oily meats and cheeses to balance it. —S.H.

82 Clayhouse 2007 Adobe Red (Central Coast); \$15. A rugged wine, with harsh tannins and a green, unripe taste to the cherry-berry flavors. —S.H.

ROSÉ WINES

87 Six Sigma 2008 Rosé (Lake County); \$18. A good rosé, properly dry and crisp, and not too fruity. There are dried herb and tea notes to the raspberries, and a nice spiciness. A little sharp on the finish, but a fine effort. —S.H.

81 Glen Ellen 2008 Zinfandel Rosé (California); \$10. Overtly sugary, basically a dessert wine, with raspberry, vanilla and spice flavors. —S.H.

CHARDONNAY

95 Williams Selyem 2007 Hawk Hill Vineyard Chardonnay (Russian River Valley); \$50. Very powerful, very strong, almost overwhelming in the sheer wealth of fruit and oak, but balanced with acidity. This is of course a trademark of the vineyard. Winemaker Bob Cabral himself calls it "concentrated." It detonates on the palate with an almost dessert wine quality of lemons, pineapples, honey, vanilla and minerals, but it's totally dry. Will hold for perhaps six years. —S.H.

94 Bjornstad 2007 Ritchie Vineyard Chardonnay (Russian River Valley); \$40. Dramatically rich and ripe, a bells and whistles Chardonnay made in the white Burgundy style. It's flamboyant in pineapple, nectarine, guava and oak- and lees-influenced buttered toast, cream and vanilla crème brûlée, but it's also very acidic and dry, which provides balance and elegance. Fine now and for 3 or 4 years. —S.H.

94 Pahlmeyer 2007 Chardonnay (Sonoma Coast); \$70. A massive Chardonnay, rich in fruit and oak. Shows long, decadent flavors of roasted pineapples, nectarines, honeysuckle, vanilla, buttered toast and meringue, dusted with cinnamon spice and brown sugar. Structure is fortunately provided by crisp acidity and even a framework of wood tannins. Now–2013. —S.H.

93 Bjornstad 2007 Porter-Bass Vineyard Chardonnay (Sonoma Coast); \$40. Chardonnay doesn't get much richer or riper than this. Explodes with grilled pineapple, lemondrop, smoky meringue, buttered toast and cinnamon spice flavors, bright-



smoky butter, brightened with crisp acidity. The grapes come from Yountville. —S.H.

87 Dry Creek Vineyard 2008 Fumé Blanc (Sonoma County); \$12.

Great price for this unoaked white wine. It's smooth and crisp in mouthwatering acidity, with ripe flavors of citrus fruits, lemongrass, minerals and vanilla that finish with a honeyed richness. Easy to find, with production of 21,696 cases. **Best Buy.** —S.H.

87 Gainey 2008 Limited Selection Sauvignon Blanc (Santa Ynez Valley); \$18.

Although the winery describes the oak on this wine as neutral, it seems to stick out. The flavors are dominated by buttered toast and vanilla honey. Then the lemons and limes kick in, with their undergirding of minerals. Gainey has good grapes, but needs to develop a better delineation between their regular and Limited Selection Sauvignon Blanc. —S.H.

86 Forth 2008 Sanford Ranch Sauvignon Blanc (Mendocino County); \$18.

A nice, versatile white wine at the table. It's crisp in acidity and highly aromatic, with flavors of citrus, geranium, green melon, honeysuckle, vanilla and cinnamon. Finishes basically dry, although that honey makes it almost sweet. —S.H.

85 Flora Springs 2008 Soliloquy Vineyard Sauvignon Blanc (Oakville); \$20.

Good structure on this 100% Sauvignon Blanc, with crisp acidity and even some nice, dusty tannins. But the pineapple, Meyer lemon and lime flavors are too sugary sweet for a dry table wine. —S.H.

85 Wrath 2008 San Saba Vineyard Sauvignon Blanc (Monterey); \$23.

This is an oak-free wine. It's bone dry and very crisp in acidity, which cleanses the palate and prepares it for food. The flavors are of citrus fruits and gooseberries. There's a strong hint of that feline taste that turns some people off. —S.H.

84 Clayhouse 2008 Sauvignon Blanc (Paso Robles); \$14.

A bit on the sweet side, with flavors of lemonade, pineapple juice and vanilla. But it's balanced with crisp acidity. Fine with ham, fruit salad, Chinese food. —S.H.

84 Joseph Phelps 2008 Sauvignon Blanc (St. Helena); \$32.

A bit on the sweet, simple side, with flavors like a supermarket carton of pineapple, apple, pear and mango juices. Oak adds even sweeter notes of vanilla. Lacks complexity, especially at this price. —S.H.

84 No 2008 Sauvignon Blanc (Lake County); \$12.

A crisply acidic Sauvignon Blanc, with savory flavors of citrus fruits, lemongrass and vanilla that finish with a honeyed sweetness. There's more than a touch of that gooseberry, feline spray that is a little cloying. —S.H.

84 Six Sigma 2008 Rooster Vineyard Sauvignon Blanc (Lake County); \$20.

This is a Marlborough-style Sauvignon Blanc. It's bone dry and crisply acidic, with a firm, mineral finish. The flavors are of limes, lemons and gooseberries, with a potent suggestion of feline intensity. —S.H.

RIESLING

91 Tangent 2008 Paragon Vineyard Riesling (Edna Valley); \$20.

Brilliant. That crisp, tart Edna Valley acidity provides the perfect counterpoint to the orange, peach, apricot, honeysuckle flower and mineral flavors. This unoaked Riesling is a joy to drink. The winemaker suggests Mexican dishes, but it's super-versatile. **Editors' Choice.** —S.H.

88 Castle Rock 2008 Riesling (Monterey County); \$12.

Shows the brilliantly clean, racy acidity of Monterey that provides backbone and firmness to the citrus, peach, wildflower and mineral flavors. With a hint of diesel, it's a lovely California Riesling at a great price. **Best Buy.** —S.H.

86 Kendall-Jackson 2008 Vintner's Reserve Riesling (Monterey County); \$12.

Not really dry, this Riesling has an official residual sugar reading of 2.11. It's blended with Gewürztraminer, Muscat Canelli, Chardonnay and Viognier. The end result is fruity and spicy, with flavors of honey-splashed apples, citrus fruits and peaches. High acidity provides much-needed crispness. —S.H.

86 Scheid Vineyards 2007 Viento Vineyard Late Harvest Riesling (Monterey); \$21.

Very sweet, with flavors of honey, apricot jam, orange essence and smoky

vanilla. There's lots of good acidity to make it clean. Could be more concentrated, though. —S.H.

VIOGNIER

92 Tangent 2008 Paragon Vineyard Viognier (Edna Valley); \$17.

Even though this wine is unoaked and inexpensive, it's one of the best Viogniers out there. It shows the lean, drily crisp profile of Edna Valley whites, with wildly exotic flavors of citrus, tropical fruits, wildflowers, peaches, pears, minerals and vanilla. At this price, it's a giveaway. **Editors' Choice.** —S.H.

87 Rivino 2008 Viognier (Mendocino); \$24.

There's no oak on this Viognier, so the fruit stands out, and what fruit it is. Supertripe in pineapples, honey, mangoes, guavas and Asian pears, with crisp, citrusy acidity that makes it vibrant and clean, if a little direct. Drink now. —S.H.

85 Halter Ranch 2008 Halter Ranch Vineyard Viognier (Paso Robles); \$24.

Made in a very fruity style, with upfront, sweet pineapple, peach, green apple and honeysuckle flavors. Acidity provides some cleansing balance to the flamboyant richness. —S.H.

85 Lucas & Lewellen 2008 Viognier (Santa Barbara County); \$19.

Fruity and very acidic, with jammy flavors of limes and tart green apples. It's a dry, streamlined wine with some resemblance to Pinot Grigio. —S.H.

84 Lucas & Lewellen 2008 Late Harvest Viognier (Santa Barbara County); \$24.

Very sweet, with honey and apricot jam flavors balanced with keen acidity. Yet sweetness is almost all you get. The underlying flavors are thin. —S.H.

OTHER WHITE WINES

96 Williams Selyem 2007 Late Harvest Muscat (Russian River Valley); \$40.

The winery's philosophy is, if you're going to make a dessert wine, why not make it fabulously sweet instead of boringly off-dry? With 17.5% residual sugar, this indeed hits the limit of the sweetness scale. Yet it's superbly balanced with acidity, giving a refreshing balance to



the intense apricot jam, lemon drop, candied ginger, pineapple crème brûlée and vanilla custard flavors. A tremendous success for a California dessert wine. **Editors' Choice.** —S.H.

91 Tangent 2008 Paragon Vineyard Albariño (Edna Valley); \$17. A beautiful white wine notable for its extreme dryness and fresh crispness of acidity. Really cleanses the mouth, letting it appreciate the unoaked flavors of tangerine, melon, peach and minerals. A brilliant wine to drink with almost anything, but especially shellfish. **Editors' Choice.** —S.H.

89 Fenestra 2008 Silvaspoons Vineyards Torrontés (Lodi); \$15. A really nice, dry wine that stimulates the mouth with crisp acidity, then offers waves of interesting, complex flavors. Lemons, limes and pineapples are accented with richer notes of papayas and honeysuckle, finishing in a swirl of spice. Good as an exotic alternative to Sauvignon Blanc. **Editors' Choice.** —S.H.

88 Fenestra 2008 Sémillon (Livermore Valley); \$13. Quite a nice white wine for its acidity and sophistication, which is a function of the crispness. Shows clean, lively flavors of citrus fruits, peaches, wildflowers and vanilla, with umami notes of cashew nut and foie gras. Dry, but feels honey-rich on the finish. **Best Buy.** —S.H.

87 Eberle 2008 Muscat Canelli (Paso Robles); \$14. This is a dependably good, satisfyingly sweet wine from Eberle. The 2008 vintage, with 5.5% residual sugar, is overtly sweet, with good acidity framing savory flavors of tangerine crème brûlée, apricot jam, ripe pear and vanilla custard. Good price for a full bottle of a dessert wine this delicious. —S.H.

87 Halter Ranch 2008 Halter Ranch Côtes de Paso Blanc Marsanne-Roussanne (Paso Robles); \$24. Fruity, rich and honey-sweet, with decadent flavors of peach and pear jam, apricot, pineapple, green apple and vanilla, enhanced with sweet, smoky oak. There's a good spine of acidity for balance. —S.H.

87 Thomas Fogarty 2008 Gewürztraminer (Monterey); \$18. A classic California Gewürz, dry and coastal crisp in acidity. Assaults the palate with citrus, papaya and flowery geranium flavors that are washed with

peppery Asian spices of every kind. A great apéritif wine or with North African and Indian fare. —S.H.

84 Calcareous 2008 Marsanne (Paso Robles); \$25. Almost as sweet as a dessert wine, with vanilla-scented flavors of tropical fruits, honeysuckle flowers and crème brûlée. Would benefit from greater acidity to balance all that richness, but will appeal to people who like an off-dry white wine. —S.H.

84 Fenestra 2008 Semonnay Semillon-Chardonnay (Livermore Valley); \$16. A little on the simple, sweetly fruity side, with pie-filling pineapple and apple flavors enriched with smoky vanilla, caramel and buttered popcorn. Nice and crisp in acidity, but tastes a bit too sweet for a dry table wine. —S.H.

84 Five Rivers 2008 Pinot Grigio (California); \$11. Made sugary-sweet, with lemonade and pineapple juice flavors that are offset with crisp, coastal acidity. The grapes seem to have come from Monterey County. —S.H.

84 Little Black Dress 2008 Pinot Grigio (California); \$13. Made in the style that has made Pinot Grigio so popular. It's fruity and crisp in acidity and finishes slightly sweet. Tastes like a blend of orange, pineapple and mango fruit juice. —S.H.

82 Jalama 2007 Giallo (Santa Barbara County); \$20. Made from Pinot Gris, this dry white wine tastes too oaky in buttered toast, buttered popcorn and caramel. It finishes with raw acidity. —S.H.

NEW YORK

CABERNETS & BLENDS

87 Bellangelo 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon (Finger Lakes); \$24. This rich Cabernet starts with aromas of vanilla, nutty oak and mocha, unfolding into flavors of ripe red berries, cedar, pepper and toast. Good depth of flavor and a poised fruit and acid balance give the wine class. Pair with rich meat dishes or ripe cheeses. —S.K.

87 Bouké 2007 Red Table Wine (North Fork of Long Island); \$21. This Cabernet Franc, Merlot, Petit Verdot and Syrah blend starts with a sultry wave of juicy

plum, smoke, pepper and cherry. On the palate, it's full-bodied with flavors of cherry, currant, plum and clove. A brooding, unfolding wine perfect for a fireside sip. —S.K.

87 Osprey's Dominion 2005 Flight Meritage (North Fork of Long Island); \$35. An enticing Meritage, with aromas of violet, anise, crushed herbs and red berry fruit followed by deep, savory spice flavors of cinnamon, pepper and cedar. Balanced but full of character, this wine will pair well with meats and poultry dishes. —S.K.

87 Palmer NV Select Reserve (North Fork of Long Island); \$25. This wine starts with an attractive blend of cinnamon, clove and cigarbox aromas, followed by flavors of cedar, black cherry, cinnamon and pepper on the palate. Ageable and balanced, if a little fiery. —S.K.

86 Bellangelo 2006 Porto Elana Cabernet Sauvignon-Merlot (Finger Lakes); \$24. Cigarbox, pepper and red cherry on the nose leads into vanilla, smoke and cedar on the palate. Rich but not heavy, it will pair well with cured meats, cheeses, heartier dishes. —S.K.

86 Miles 2002 Milestone Cabernet Franc-Merlot (Seneca Lake); \$30. Appealing aromas of cherry, mocha and cinnamon lead on this balanced blend from Miles. On the palate, red berry and spice play against each other in an elegant dance. Friendly but poised. —S.K.

86 Waters Crest 2006 Campania Rosso (North Fork of Long Island); \$30. This red has a fruity, jammy nose with a peppery kick. On the palate it's a mixture of spicebox, cherry, coffee and pepper. Approachable and well made—a good everyday drinking red. —S.K.

85 Brotherhood 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon (New York); \$15. Cherry, black currant and cinnamon lead on the nose of Brotherhood's enticing Cabernet. On the palate, a touch of smoke mingles with red berries, spice and pepper. A clean, food-friendly style red with a lingering spicy finish —S.K.

85 Freedom Run 2006 Meritage (New York); \$28. Black and red cherry, pepper and fennel on the nose and palate recommend this rich Meritage. A full mouthfeel