



## Our Editors Pick the Must-Have Wines of 2008.

If the wines on this list are not Best Buys and are not Cellar Selections, then what exactly are they? In short, they represent the most diverse and dynamic segment of the wine industry. They are wines that offer extraordinary quality at prices that still represent affordable luxury. They are mostly wines that can be consumed over the near term, although some will undoubtedly benefit from cellaring.

In compiling our annual Top 100 lists, we go beyond simple evaluation of numeric scores and pricing. We also consider availability, buzz and balance. While availability is straightforward, buzz refers to a wine's newsworthiness or excitement factor, and whether it represents notable trends in the wine market. This year's Number One wine is a prime example, combining high quality (95 points) with reasonable price and availability (\$42, 475 cases), but then adding to its intrigue are a superstar winemaker's own label, a vineyard designation and an underappreciated variety from California.

Balance means that within the limits of what we tasted over the past year, we've tried to include wines that not only represent many different regions and grape varieties, but also vary in style. You'll find wines from 11 countries and more than 20 varieties, sparkling and still wines, table, dessert and fortified wines. One of the things we value most in the wine world is diversity, and this is one way of applauding it.

1

**95 Failla 2006 Phoenix Ranch Syrah (Napa Valley); \$42.** An awesome Syrah that proves that, while size isn't everything, it does matter. A major league wine, brilliantly packed with currant, black cherry, licorice and pepper flavors whose power is hard to exaggerate. For all that, the wine never loses its balance and sense of proportion. So good now, you won't be able to keep your hands off it, but it should hold for six years.

2

**97 San Vicente 2005 Rioja; \$65.** Talk about a wine that makes you take notice. This is simply great modern Rioja. The nose is creamy but honest, with black fruit, mocha and finely tanned leather. The palate gives the whole range of berry and tree fruits, with expansive tannins and just enough core acidity to make it stunning. Ultra stylish and delicious; another huge success for the Eguren family that owns San Vicente and other Rioja properties. Imported by Fine Estates From Spain.

3

**96 Château Lynch-Bages 2005 Pauillac; \$115.** Classic Lynch-Bages with just a bit of extra power and richness. While the tannins are structured, it is the velvety fruit that rolls around the mouth that is the most dominant character. It is coming together into a wine that will be big and dense, but never over the top. Imported by Château Lynch-Bages.

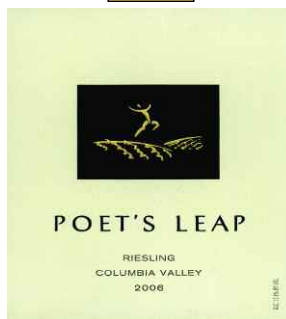
4

**94 Alma Rosa 2006 Chardonnay (Santa Barbara County); \$20.** Starts with an opulent, inviting aroma of smoky honey, vanilla, tangerines, Meyer lemons, yellow apricots, green apples and minerals. In the mouth, the flavors are very similar—an explosion of fruits, spices and toast. Just a tremendous wine, but for all the volume and complexity, it's completely balanced.

5

**95 Avignonesi 2004 Desiderio (Cortona); \$50.** Desiderio is an outstandingly delicious Merlot from Cortona with a soft, yielding personality and loads of sweet cherry-berry nuances. The wine boasts excellent complexity thanks to the playful notes of peppermint, herbs, root beer and cola that give it undying persistency and intensity. Imported by Dalla Terra.

6



Please click label for more information

**94 Poet's Leap 2006 Riesling (Columbia Valley); \$20.** Poet's Leap is the Long Shadows collaboration with Armin Diel of Germany's Schlossgut Diel. Ripe pear, melon and white peach mingle with a streak of honey. Old Yakima Valley vines contribute concentration, adding herb and mineral to the fruit. The residual sugar is about 1.4%, keeping the alcohol just under 13%, with acids that keep flavors buoyant and precise.

7

**95 Maurodos 2004 San Roman (Toro); \$50.** About as good as it gets in terms of a powerful, fully oaked modern wine that still guards its core identity while offering plenty of straightforward drinking pleasure. San Roman in 2004 is a high-speed train with agile fruit and bracing acidity more dominating than, say, tannic might or alcoholic heat. Among the brave new world of modern wines from Toro this is one of the very best. 6,500 cases produced. Imported by Grapes of Spain.

8

**94 Niepoort 2005 Redoma (Douro); \$39.** While it's certainly dense, black and brooding, this wine's dominant tannins also give a base for exciting, luscious black fruit flavors. Herbal, pepper, jelly and juicy fruit flavors, speak of the strength of the Douro. Imported by European Cellars.

9

**95 Goldschmidt 2005 Vyborny Vineyard Single Vineyard Selection Cabernet Sauvignon (Alexander Valley); \$65.** Cabernet collectors who look beyond Napa Valley should be aware of this wine. It's an important addition to the Alexander Valley pantheon, a densely layered young wine. Shows brilliant red stone fruit, cassis, cola, date nut bread, mocha and tangerine zest flavors gorgeously lavished with the vanilla and smoky caramel of oak. Just delicious now, and should slowly spread its wings for many years.

10

**94 Château Coutet 2005 Barsac; \$40.** Surprisingly dry, this has richness rather than sweetness, and intense, powerful botrytis. The honey is intensely perfumed, along with baked apples and spice. Certainly a long-aging wine.

11

**97 Talley 2005 Rosemary's Vineyard Pinot Noir (Arroyo Grande Valley); \$70.** This is a great 2005 Pinot Noir, the best ever from Talley. The wine somehow combines huge ripe fruit with delicacy. It floods the mouth with profound currant, cherry pie, licorice, cola, raspberry, cocoa and vanilla flavors, yet feels light and silky, and is thoroughly dry. That's the magic of Pinot Noir. You can enjoy this small production wine now, and it should develop additional complexities for 10 years.

12

**94 Treana 2006 Mer Soleil Vineyard Viognier-Marsanne (Central Coast); \$25.** Treana has enjoyed great success with this blend of Viognier and Marsanne, which is one of the best Rhône-style white wines in California. The main reason is the source of the grapes. The vineyard, owned by the Wagners of Caymus, is stellar. The '06 is as rich and crisply acidic as ever, with fantastically complex, honeyed tropical fruit, apricot and floral flavors that taste like they have a touch of botrytis.

13

**94 Schloss Gobelsburg 2006 Heiligenstein Riesling (Kamptal); \$34.** The volcanic soils of the Heiligenstein vineyard give intense ripe fruits, rich minerality and supreme elegance. The acidity steals in, a wisp of delicious fresh fruits and spring perfumes. This is a classic wine from a top Riesling year. Imported by Michael Skurnik Wines.

14

**95 Podere L'Aione 2004 Salve (Toscana); \$54.** This is an expertly extracted and penetrating Sangiovese-based wine (with a small percentage of other grapes mixed in) that boasts an absolutely irresistible nose. It is generous and full, sweet and succulent and will definitely please now or in 10 years. Black cherries and chocolate are the main themes, with coffee and chewy tannins in the mouth. An exciting discovery from a relatively unknown estate. Imported by Morgan Import LLC.

15

**95 Astrales 2005 Ribera del Duero; \$60.** This is a huge and impressive step up from the 2003 Astrales, which was fine but not at this level. Here we're talking about color, bouquet, palate feel, intense flavors, finish, you name it. It's pure, ultratasty, chocolaty, smooth and pleasurable. Astrales is the complete package and a wine to watch. Imported by Grapes of Spain.

16

**94 O. Fournier 2004 Alfa Crux (Uco Valley); \$45.** Talk about a deep, luscious wine. The bouquet emits a magnetic blend of chocolate cake, fine leather and berry marmalade, while the midsection is downright delicious but also very pure and natural despite the wine seeing 20 months of new oak. ACrux catches and holds every note, and it should age well for another 5 to 8 years. Imported by Jorge Ordoñez Selections.

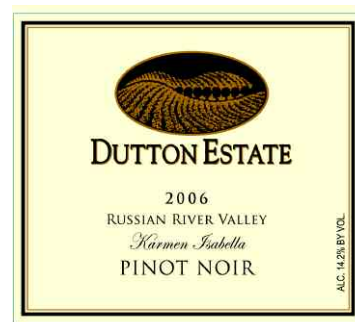
17

**94 Château Labegorce Margaux 2005 Margaux; \$45.** New wood, sweet fruit, blackberry and plum skin flavors are all here in this round, ripe wine, with its soft, dusty tannins and delicious fresh acidity. This property has certainly joined the big league in Margaux.

18

**93 Beringer 2004 Alluvium Red Table Wine (Knights Valley); \$30.** This shows wonderfully layered, complex flavors, in addition to great structure. Thoroughly dry, with rich, fine tannins, it flatters with red and black currant, red cherry, milk chocolate, licorice, root beer, vanilla, dusty spice and smoky oak flavors. Luscious now and through 2010.

19



Please click label for more information

**94 Dutton Estate 2006 Karmen Isabella Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); \$32.** This is one of the palest Pinots of the vintage, so translucent, you can hardly believe its power. A blend of various Dutton Ranch vineyards the result is serious and fabulous, a complex wine with cherry, cola and spice flavors and a luxuriously silky texture. This is textbook, world class RRV Pinot from a very great vintage.

20

**94 Foxen 2007 Tinaquaic Vineyard Chardonnay (Santa Maria Valley); \$32.** This bottling by veteran Foxen offers one of the starkest, most appealing choices available in California Chardonnay. Far from a superripe buttery monster, it's a lean, elegant machine. With vibrant acidity and a mineral undergirding, it offers rich flavors of citrus fruits and rind and yeasty, Champagne-like lees. *Editors' Choice.*

21

**96 Dr. Loosen 2006 Erdener Prälat Riesling Auslese (Mosel-Saar-Ruwer); \$42/375 ml.** Wow. This gorgeous dessert-style auslese explodes from the glass in a cavalcade of sweet fruit and spice. Honeyed peaches and dried apricots are most prominent, but shadings of cinnamon and allspice give complexity, while crisp acids provide impeccable balance on the long finish. Delicious now, this wine should easily evolve for up to 40 years. Imported by Loosen Bros. USA.

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22

**95 Iron Horse 2002 Blanc de Blancs (Green Valley); \$38.** The virtues of this 100% Chardonnay are its elegance, cleanliness, brightness and the sheer pleasure it offers. It's so refined and complex, offering flavors of Meyer lemons, Kaffir limes, brioche and smoky vanilla that change endlessly in the glass. Just fabulous, and a terrifically versatile food wine.

23

**95 Betz Family Winery 2005 Clos de Betz Red Wine (Columbia Valley); \$40.** The 2005 Clos de Betz explodes from the glass with profound scents of pipe tobacco, violets, cherries and clove. Immediately supple and silky, this delicious blend of 56% Merlot, 19% Cabernet Sauvignon, 16% Malbec and 9% Cabernet Franc offers more complexity than any Clos de Betz to date. Silky, tightly packed fruit flavors are seamlessly blended, with berries, currants and cherries galore. The tannins have been buffed to a fine lustre.

24

**93 Peter Franus 2007 Sauvignon Blanc (Carneros); \$22.** There aren't too many Sauvignon Blancs from Carneros, but judging from this beauty, the grape thrives there. In the right hands, of course. This one's from great vineyards, including Truchard's. It's a magnificent wine in the white Bordeaux style, rich and lush in mineral-laden gooseberry, honeysuckle, white peach, Asian pear and lemongrass flavors, with a vibrant edge of tangy pepper spice.

25

**92 Graf Hardegg 2006 Vom Schloss Reserve Grüner Veltliner (Niederösterreich); \$25.** An impressive, powerful pepper- and yellow fruit-flavored wine, which has been given a considerable depth of flavor by the wood fermentation and lees aging. The balance is great. It is a wine that shows class and aging

potential. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd.

26

**94 Dry Creek Vineyard 2005 Beeson Ranch Zinfandel (Dry Creek Valley); \$34.** With a splash of Petite Sirah, this Zin is dark and exceedingly powerful in blackberry and cherry fruit, with complex notes of dark chocolate, licorice, Chinese five-spice and white pepper. A dramatic wine that calls for dramatic food.

27

**95 Poggio Nardone 2001 Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$60.** A liquid lullaby more than a wine, this Brunello caresses and smoothes over your senses with amazing intensity and harmonious aromas of cherry-chocolate fudge, almond paste, ginger, balsamic notes, blueberry pie, firewood and vanilla. There's a shroud of cedar and cherry fruit within the wine's unwavering structure and a seemingly endless finish. Imported by Romano Brands.

28

**94 Quinta do Vallado 2005 Reserva (Douro); \$50.** A powerhouse of a wine that promises huge fruit flavors, this is a time bomb of richness, which will break through those dark tannins and the closed, dense texture. Imported by Quintessential Wines.

29

**93 Frankland Estate 2004 Isolation Ridge Vineyard Shiraz (Frankland River); \$30.** This is the sort of Shiraz that forces tasters to re-examine their view of the variety as produced in Australia. It starts off with powerful aromas of cracked pepper and floral notes evocative of violets, then delivers explosively spicy flavors of pepper and licorice cushioned by ripe blackberries and a rich, supple texture. It's the best of New and Old Worlds. Drink 2010–2020 plus. Imported by USA Wine West.

30

**96 Chateau Ste. Michelle 2006 Ethos Late Harvest White Riesling (Columbia Valley); \$40.** This is just this side of unctuous, a decadently ripe and rich late harvest Riesling. The residual sugar is at 23%, the alcohol a moderate 8%, and the balance impeccable, with a buoyant underpinning to the intense sweetness. It avoids sugary granularity as well, offering seamless, concentrated fruit that piles on flavors of peach, apricot, banana, mango, papaya and melon in wild profusion, trailing into sweet tea and honey. Apart from the winery's Single Berry Select Trockenberenauslese project with Ernie Loosen, this is the best dessert wine made in Washington.

31

**94 Novy Cellars 2006 Rosella's Vineyard Syrah (Santa Lucia Highlands); \$33.** This dramatic and stunningly rich Syrah shows depth, power and ripely smooth, finely ground tannins that make it drinkable now. Black currants, licorice, mocha, violets, mushu plum sauce, black pepper and Provençal herbs fascinate as the wine changes in the glass. Drink now through 2010.

32

**95 Arrowood 2005 Réserve Spéciale Chardonnay (Sonoma County); \$35.** Rich and satisfying, this opulent Chardonnay dazzles with sheer deliciousness. Master winemaker Richard Arrowood has pulled out all the stops on this Burgundian-style wine. The flavors, of pineapple custard, lemon meringue, green apple butter, crème brûlée and gingersnap cookie, are balanced by perfect acidity. This is by far Arrowood's greatest Chardonnay in recent memory.

33

**93 Abelis Carthago 2004 Lui Selection (Toro); \$27.** The Lui & William bodega is behind this outstanding Tempranillo from Toro. The wine shows a brilliant violet tint in front of intense, inky aromas of black cherry and chocolate cake. The palate is superripe and bucks like a bronco; the tannins are dense and form titanic structure, and the finish of coffee and spice hints at a fine cigar. It's a huge load at 15%, so be prepared. Imported by The Ravensvale Group.

34

**95 Château Guiraud 2005 Sauternes; \$65.** Typical of the huge power of Guiraud, this is one of the richest Sauternes in 2005. The wine is rich and intense, the dry edge of botrytis just dominating the sweetness. Flavors of honey, almonds and peaches give the wine extra complexity.

35

**95 Podere Sapaio 2004 Sapaio (Bolgheri Superiore); \$66.** Not bad for a first attempt. This is a thick, dark wine of almost impenetrable extraction and mature fruit notes of black cherry and black currant. Its aromas are painted in broad brush strokes and invoke roasted espresso bean, black chocolate and smoked game. It has an outstanding mouthfeel, with voluptuous but solid tannins and enormous length. Drink after 2015. Imported by Vinifera Imports.

36

**93 Domaine Luneau-Papin 1995 Le L d'Or de Pierre Luneau (Muscadet Sèvre Et Maine); \$32.** It's an extraordinary wine that still tastes so fresh after 13 years, but for a Muscadet it's almost unbelievable. Yet, here is this citrus and white currant flavored wine that still shows high acidity and liveliness as well as a depth of texture that has come during its aging. Probably at its peak now. Imported by Louis/Dressner Selections.

37

**92 Clos de los Siete 2006 Uco Valley; \$18.** Never in its young history has the Clos 7 blend tasted this good right away. The '06 shows excellent young aromas of charcoal, black pepper and blackberry. The palate preserves that pepper and coffee blackness as it strides across ripe, satisfying blackberry and cassis flavors. It's 45% Malbec and then smaller amounts of Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah. Made by Michel Rolland and the other owners of the Clos de los Siete vineyards. Imported by Dourthe USA.

38

**95 Kynsi 2005 Stone Corral Vineyard Pinot Noir (Edna Valley); \$45.** An enormously opulent wine, brimming with gobs of red cherries, currants, mocha, clove, cinnamon and pepper flavors. Impresses for the lushness and integrity of the structure. Brilliant wine, just gorgeous, a real crowd-pleaser. With its recent track record, Kynsi enters the front ranks of California Pinot Noir producers.

39

**94 Gary Farrell 2005 Westside Farms Chardonnay (Russian River Valley); \$38.** This is a single-vineyard Chard grown on Westside Road, in the heart of the northern valley's Pinot country. It's a very elaborated wine, high in acidity, showing tiers of tart green apple, Kaffir lime, pear, smoky oak and Champagne-like lees and brioche flavors. Just great, and should hold for six years or more.

40

**94 Louis Jadot 2005 Epenots Premier Cru (Pommard); \$58.** A dark-fruited wine, with layers of wild strawberries, red currants and enticing perfumed acidity. That's the outward show; inside this is a dense wine, with dark tannins and a firm heart, which will mature over decades. Imported by Kobrand.

41

**96 Leonetti Cellar 2006 Merlot (Columbia Valley); \$65.** This bright, aromatic, vivid wine opens with a bowlful of berries and cherries. There is plenty of acid under the ripe fruit, which takes center stage at the moment. The significant addition of Carmenère (from the Seven Hills vineyard) adds black pepper to the engaging mix of flavors. Despite its youth, the flavors persist for a remarkably long finish.

42

**95 J Vineyards & Winery 2000 Vintage Brut (Russian River Valley); \$50.** A great California bubbly, right up at the top. It's unusual for a sparkling wine house to hold back their basic vintage brut this long, but J did, and consumers benefit. The wine has some bottle age, and is softly picking up nutty, dried fruit, floral and yeasty notes. Enormously complex, it should continue to develop for many years.

43

**94 Bella 2005 Lily Hill Estate Zinfandel (Dry Creek Valley); \$36.** If you want to understand the essence of Dry Creek Valley Zinfandel, taste this wine. It's absolutely classic. Shows the region's balance, power and elegance. From the wild blackberry, raspberry, fig and tangerine zest fruit, to the clove, white pepper and anise spices, to the fabulously rich tannic structure, this is great, world-class Zinfandel. The high alcohol feels absolutely natural.

44

**92 Marqués de Cáceres 2001 Gran Reserva (Rioja); \$35.** Might this be the best wine Marqués de Cáceres has produced? The vintage is one of Spain's greatest, and gran reserva is supposed to be Rioja in its loftiest form. So indulge in this beauty's rock-solid structure, lovely violet and raspberry aromas, and long, stout finish. Best from 2012–2018. Imported by Vineyard Brands.

45

**95 San Giusto a Rentennano 2004 Percarlo (Toscana); \$70.** Percarlo is an outstandingly intense and complex Sangiovese that is true to its Tuscan roots. Aromas are wide and penetrating and span the gamut of balsamic possibilities, voluptuous fruit, lead pencil and spice. It is round and very fragrant in the mouth with plush smoothness and soft extraction. Imported by Marc de Grazia Selections.

46

**93 Signorello 2006 Seta (Napa Valley); \$25.** Signorello was a pioneer of producing white Meritage-style wines modeled after the Graves region of Bordeaux. This '06, a blend of Sémillon and Sauvignon Blanc, is very rich. It has the creamy textural weight of Chardonnay, yet the flavor profile is of lime pie, figs, green melons and nectarines. A great success and a value at this price.

47

**96 Karl Erbes 2006 Ürziger Würzgarten Riesling Auslese \* \* \* Goldkap (Mosel-Saar-Ruwer); \$53/375 ml.** Rich and sweet yet without excessive weight, Erbes' three-star auslese goldkap features beautifully delineated aromas and flavors of dried apricots, ripe peaches and pineapples as well as great minerality and freshness. The finish is virtually endless. Imported by Chapin Cellars, LLC.

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48



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**95 Laetitia 2006 Reserve Pinot Noir (Arroyo Grande Valley); \$40.** Laetitia's best reserve ever. In a word, gorgeous. There's a soft silkiness, a caressingly smooth mouthfeel that just seduces the palate into submission. Then the deliciousness sinks in, all red currants, cherries, mocha, licorice, pepper and smoke, set off with fine acidity and tannins. So compulsively drinkable, you can't keep your hands off it. Best now through 2010.

49

**94 Robert Karl 2005 Syrah (Columbia Valley); \$29.** This is Washington Syrah at its most distinctive. The fruit stands out with tart and tangy flavors of boysenberry, raspberry and a tartness reminiscent of cranberry. There are streaks of meat, smoke and bacon, and the acids are clean. This is a glorious food wine, but so juicy, assertive and delicious that it almost demands to be drunk on its own. Will it evolve in the cellar? Probably, but it's hard to keep your hands off it long enough to find out.

50

**95 Col d'Orcia 2004 Olmaia Cabernet (Sant'Antimo); \$75.** Olmaia is a pure expression of Cabernet Sauvignon that hits all the right marks. You can taste the variety's natural flavors but they never seem green or medicinal. Instead the wine is plush, soft, round and opulent, with ideal harmony and balance and beautiful delivery of chocolate, cherry, vanilla and herbal aromas. The wine almost exaggerates, if possible, its generosity and roundness. Imported by Palm Bay International.

51

**96 Williams Selyem 2005 Flax Vineyard Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); \$54.** A brilliant young Pinot that magically combines instant drinkability with ageworthiness. Silky and supple, the wine has broad, deep raspberry, cherry, cola, cocoa and spice flavors that are wrapped into sweet, fine tannins, leading to a long, complicated finish. Just gorgeous from the first sniff to the last sip, and should age well through 2015.

52

**94 JLC 2004 Syrah (Columbia Valley); \$25.** Often in Washington a bit of Syrah is blended into Cabernet; this cleverly reverses it with 10% Cabernet Sauvignon added to the Spoford Station estate vineyard grapes. It's got a lush fruit base, with strong flavors of silage and compost—the sort of biodynamically-induced “funk” that marks Cayuse wines. This is stylistic and distinctive, but not for everyone. I love the depth, the texture and the length—it's not just about the fruit.

53

**93 Calera 2006 Chardonnay (Mount Harlan); \$25.** Brilliant Chardonnay, compulsively drinkable. You'll find a fabulous array of flavors, ranging from pineapples, mangoes and limes to lees- and oak-influenced smoke and creamy vanilla. There's also a juicy streak of crisp acidity and a flinty tang of minerals in the finish. Very fine.

54

**94 Fonseca 2004 Quinta do Panascal Vintage Port; \$49.** In the Fonseca tradition, this is a hugely rich wine, very dense. It is not all weight, with excellently integrated firm tannins and a range of complex flavors, from nuts and berry fruits to full frontal ripeness. There is some dryness to finish. Imported by Kobrand.

55

**93 Gloria Ferrer 2001 Royal Cuvée (Carneros); \$35.** Royal Cuvée is usually Gloria Ferrer's best bubbly, and so it is with this bottling, a worthy followup to the past several vintages. Very finely structured, it shows appealing flavors of cherries, citrus fruits and vanilla, and is so rich, it's almost like a table wine. Addictively good now. Watch it change as it warms in the glass.

56

**93 Pacific Rim 2007 Wallula Vineyard Biodynamic Riesling (Columbia Valley); \$32.** This vineyard has been Demeter certified biodynamic, one of just a handful in Washington to achieve that recognition. It's all natural, ripe and full-flavored, with a wonderful, mouthfilling intensity. The flavors are a lovely mix of stone, yeast, flower and a jumble of citrus and apple fruits.

57

**93 Finca Coronado 2004 Vino de la Tierra de Castilla; \$34.** Fans of Miguel Angel de Gregorio's Finca Allende wines from Rioja will want to snap up this excellent, lush-styled blend of Graciano, Merlot and Petit Verdot from La Mancha. This wine almost proves that talent is as important as terroir, because no other La Mancha wine features this grape blend, these rich and pure medicinal flavors, and a smooth-handed sense of balance that calls for drinking now through 2013. Imported by Jorge Ordoñez Selections.

58

**93 Pratesi 2005 Carmione (Toscana); \$35.** The intensity of this powerhouse Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Merlot blend is outstanding, and so is the density of its aromas. It presents a solid wall of blackberry, dark chocolate, pipe tobacco and cigar box. It's bold and syrupy and overwhelms the palate with its enormous bounty. Imported by Winebow.

59

**95 Château Branaire-Ducru 2005 Saint-Julien; \$80.** This is opulent, but with restraint. The fruit is rich, black and delicious. Touches of spice and wood are present, lending complexity to the ripe fruits and balanced tannins. Impressive.

60

**92 Maycas del Limari 2005 Reserva Especial Syrah (Limari Valley); \$20.** For a first vintage out of northerly Limari Valley, this Concha y Toro effort from winemaker Marcelo Papa exceeds any reasonable expectations. It's an exotic, unique version of perfectly ripe, healthy Syrah from a perfect Chilean vintage. It steamrolls with maxed-out wild berry fruit, a saturated feel and backbone. Enjoy now and over the next few years. Imported by Banfi Vintners.

61

**93 Novelty Hill 2006 Stillwater Creek Vineyard Viognier (Columbia Valley); \$20.** From the first sniff you know it's Viognier and you can't wait to splash around in it—it's just got that indefinable mix of flower, perfume, citrus rind and stone fruit that typifies the finest Washington Viogniers. The flavors are beautifully defined, racy and sharp, walking the high wire between bitter and hot with amazing grace and dexterity.

62

**97 Arista 2005 Ferrington Vineyard Pinot Noir (Anderson Valley); \$54.** Showing the superb structure of the vintage and the spectacular way this great vineyard can ripen Pinot Noir, this polished wine is not only delicious from the get-go, but ageable. Floods the mouth with lush black cherry, red currant, cola, sweet oak, anise, vanilla and cinnamon spice flavors that go on and on. A memorable wine that should slowly gather steam and peak by 2011, then begin a long, steady arc downward.

63

**95 Charles Creek 2004 La Vista Stagecoach Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$55.** This is a deft Cabernet, the opposite of the modern cult style, better defined by what it is not. It's a brilliantly structured wine, with a firm architecture of tannins and acids. The flavors of blackberries, currants, cedar and spice are deeply satisfying. Drink now and for the next six years.

64

**93 La Braccasca 2004 Bramasole Syrah (Cortona); \$38.** Delicious, sweet-smelling and gorgeous, this Syrah from Cortona exhibits flawless aromas of ripe blueberry, spice, bacon and tobacco. The extraction is excellent and so is the intensity of its mouthfeel. Imported by Ste. Michelle Wine Estates.

65

**96 Roessler 2005 Clos Pepe Vineyard Pinot Noir (Sta. Rita Hills); \$50.** Clos Pepe is one of those vineyards that rarely fails to dazzle, and Roessler has done as good a job at interpreting it as any of the wineries that designate its fruit. The wine shows a terrific balance of acids, oak and tannins, with an elegantly silky texture and exquisitely ripe, but controlled, cherry, pomegranate, cola, tea and Asian spice flavors that finish with a lip-smacking, chalky minerality.

66

**96 Sineann 2006 Resonance Reserve Pinot Noir (Willamette Valley); \$72.** This is Sineann's first reserve, a limited release from some old vine blocks from one of Oregon's greatest Pinot vineyards, now fully biodynamic. As good as the "regular" Resonance is, this ramps it up another notch or two. The fruit ranges from cherry to prune; the acids are perfect, the barrel notes so well-concealed that you cannot separate them out. Streaks of cherry, fig, coffee, smoke, chocolate, Bourbon, caramel—where do you stop? It just goes and goes. Phenomenal wine-making.

67

**93 Joh. Jos. Prüm 2006 Wehlener Sonnenuhr Riesling Spätlese (Mosel-Saar-Ruwer); \$41.** Manfred Prüm looks to have followed up his amazing 2005s with 2006s that come close in quality. The 2006 WS spätlese shows a certain reserved minerality on the nose, but opens up into a gorgeously layered palate of apple, vanilla and citrus flavors. It's medium-bodied but zesty and fresh at the same that it's creamy and rich. And there's plenty of concentration and length on the finish. Imported by Valckenberg International, Inc.

68

**96 Testarossa 2006 Cuvée Nictaire Pinot Noir (California); \$75.** Of all Testarossa's 2006 Pinots, this is the most complex, and also the most ageworthy. Offers a flood of cherry, red currant, Dr. Pepper, raspberry, licorice, vanilla cookie and oaky spice flavors that are fantastically intense and interesting. This bottling is one of Testarossa's highest-alcohol Pinots. Great now and for a good six more years.

69

**95 Vall Llach 2005 Priorat; \$85.** For the second vintage in a row, Vall Llach's signature red blend is out on its own. The bouquet is round and deep, with alluring cola, mint and blackberry aromas. The palate is alive but still quite dark, with huge black plum and blackberry flavors. Super long on the finish, with a subtle streak of vanilla and coconut. Delicious but also deft. 450 cases produced. Imported by Folio Fine Wine Partners.

70

**95 Saxum 2005 James Berry Vineyard (Paso Robles); \$55.** Solidly in the Saxum style, which is to say a high alcohol (15.5%), massively flavored wine of enormous concentration and power. The blackberry, cherry, cassis and chocolate flavors have all kind of overtones,

ranging from licorice and vanilla to gingerbread and candied violets. Saxum has become a cult favorite, one of the highest-priced brands from Paso Robles, and wines like this are the reason why. Drink now and through 2008. Syrah, Mourvèdre and Grenache.

71

**92 Domaine Chignard 2006 Cuvée Spéciale (Fleurie); \$25.** There's an explosion of rich, intense fruit here: dried prunes, black plums and even some licorice. The wine is attractively edged with wood, giving a fine, ripe finish. Imported by Kermit Lynch Wine Merchant.

72

**93 Muruve 2004 Élite (Toro); \$38.** A top-flight Toro that knows how to step on the gas but keep the car centered. Aromas of dried lavender, violets, coffee and black fruit come together marvelously, while the palate is dark as Mud Cake but still loaded with tasty blackberry and black currants. Pure and strapping, and giving all the oomph that Toro is known for. Imported by Universal Wines & Spirits.

73

**94 Chaleur Estate 2006 Blanc (Columbia Valley); \$34.** Rich and smoky, this Sauvignon Blanc-Sémillon blend delivers a nose suggesting golden raisins, ripe figs, white peaches and light streaks of butter, honey and caramel. The fruit and wood are balanced and the alcohol is a moderate 13.5%. Everything here is in proportion, layered, smooth and seductive. More than past vintages, this is a Chaleur Blanc that seems destined to age and develop over the next decade or more.

74



Please click label for more information

**93 Parducci 2004 True Grit Petite Sirah (Mendocino); \$25.** Parducci's '03 True Grit was a sensation. The '04 is a worthy successor. Dry, tannic and amazingly rich, it floods the mouth with blackberry, cherry, currant, leather, coffee, carob and peppery spice flavors that go on and on in the finish. Like any great young Petite Sirah, it will age for many years.

75

**93 De Bortoli 2006 Noble One Botrytis Sémillon (New South Wales); \$32/375 ml.** This wine's deep brassy color suggests honey, and the aromas of honey, dried apricots, vanilla and baking spices reinforce that suggestion of sweetness. On the palate, it delivers honeyed richness and a complex array of flavors balanced by decent acidity. It remains the standard bearer for Australian botrytis wines. Imported by De Bortoli Wines USA Inc.

76

**93 Januik 2006 Elerding Vineyard Chardonnay (Columbia Valley); \$25.** Sharp, dense, tight and oaky; this has a lot of plump pineapple, apple and sweet citrus fruit. There is a wonderful mix of spice, herb, fruit and acid. Deep and focused, this wine has serious guts and the flavors last a good long time.

77

**94** **Château Lagrange 2005 Saint-Julien; \$70.** The tannins dominate this dark, brooding wine. At this stage, it seems to have closed up, leaving the fruit and acidity buried. But with this concentration, the future looks promising. There is long aging potential here. Imported by Château Lagrange.

78

**92** **Flechas de los Andes 2006 Gran Malbec (Uco Valley); \$22.** Big-format Malbec is what we're calling this new 15.5% wine from Benjamin de Rothschild and Laurent Dassault, original partners in Michel Rolland's Clos de los Siete project. Round, lush and full of body, Flechas shows muscle but little fat. It's colorful, dark, full of black fruit and long on the finish. It is modern Malbec done for modern palates. Imported by Opici Import Company.

79

**93** **Kendall-Jackson 2006 Highland Estates Camelot Highlands Chardonnay (Santa Maria Valley); \$25.** Just might be the best \$25 Chard out there. Gorgeous and dramatic in opulence, with a creamy texture, and tremendous in ripe tropical fruit, smoky oak and vanilla flavors. There's a long, honed, buttercreamy finish.

80

**93** **Mas de Daumas Gassac 2006 Vin de Pays de la Haute Vallée du Gassac; \$40.** White currants and yellow fruit aromas are followed by a rich, exotic display of flavors, stone fruits, green herbs, apricot skins and a touch of wood. This is a complex wine, certainly young now, a wine that demands attention as well as aging. Imported by Lauber Imports.

81

**93** **Greenwood Ridge 2006 Scherrer Vineyards Zinfandel (Sonoma County); \$25.** Greenwood Ridge does a terrific job with Scherrer's Alexander Valley Zin grapes, capturing the intensity of these century vines while maintaining balance. The flavors are powerful, of wild summer red, blue and black berries, crushed pepper, Asian spices, crème de cassis, licorice and cola. Enjoy this potent wine now through 2014, before it loses its fruit.

82

**92** **TerraMater 2005 Altum Single Vineyard Shiraz (Maipo Valley); \$22.** Smooth as perfectly blended chocolate on the nose, with exceedingly comfortable yet ripe black-fruit aromas. The palate is luscious and just chewy enough, but with good spine and balance. Finishes with an alert blaze of oak and lots of length. As good a Chilean Syrah as you're likely to find. Imported by A to Z Importers.

83

**93** **Rudi Pichler 2006 Wösendorfer Kollmütz Weissburgunder Smaragd (Wachau); \$41.** An impressive wine, a real star, with its honeyed aromas, rounded green fruits and a concentration of power that is balanced with acidity and a light, floating aftertaste. Imported by Vin Divino.

84

**94** **Boudreaux Cellars 2005 Merlot (Washington); \$40.** Whether by virtue of vintage or bottle variation, Boudreaux wines seem to grate a bit wildly when first released. This new 2005 is no exception. At first sniff it explodes into life, the aromas a mix of herb, spice, tar, smoke, earth and fruit. Flavors are threaded together into a seamless, saturated whole—plum, cassis and cherry liqueur up front, earth and tannin right behind. Some tasters may find it leaning toward the medicinal, but for those who love Rob Newsom's full-speed-ahead style, this is a gorgeous bottle.

85

**94** **Mazzei 2004 Tenuta Belguardo (Maremma); \$60.** This top-notch blend of Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc from Mazzei's beautiful Maremma property boasts thick, modern concentration and pretty renderings of red fruit, vanilla and exotic spice. It has excellent texture in the mouth and is velvety and lively at the same time. Imported by Palm Bay International.

86

**93** **Domaine Vincent Dauvissat 2005 Forêt Premier Cru (Chablis); \$44.** This shows how Dauvissat's wines need to age. At the moment, this is closed up, only hinting at its almost tropical richness, ripe yellow fruits and some white currants, but still kept in balance with acidity and minerality. Imported by Vineyard Brands.

87

**92** **Wise 2005 Reserve Chardonnay (Pemberton); \$27.** Featuring a voluptuous nose of stone fruit and citrus framed by roasted nuts and toasty oak, this is a rich, amply endowed Chardonnay with a big personality and bold flavors. Ripe peach notes join with citrus, hazelnuts and toast on the long finish. Drink now. Imported by The Australia-New Zealand Wine Connection.

88

**92** **Carpineto 2004 Riserva (Chianti Classico); \$27.** This is a lovely riserva with thick and penetrating tones of cherry, spice and cola—the holy trinity of traditional Chianti Classico. The wine is dense, concentrated and intense without being too powerful or overwhelming. It would make an excellent companion to veal in a wine reduction sauce because of the natural succulence and structure. Imported by Opici Import Company.

89

**92 Saint Clair 2007 Wairau Reserve Sauvignon Blanc (Marlborough); \$27.** Saint Clair's reserve and single-block bottlings are consistently top-notch, and this concentrated Sauvignon maintains that tradition. Scents of fresh herbs, nectarine and pineapple give way to intense flavors of stone fruit. It's medium- to full-bodied, with a long finish that's fresh without being overly herbal. Drink through the end of 2008. Imported by Winesellers Ltd.

90

**97 Château Cos d'Estournel 2005 Saint-Estèphe; \$250.** Saint-Estèphe has a reputation for tannins, and this 2005 Cos lives up to that. But it does much more, because the tannins add richness along with intensely ripe black fruits, dark plums and figs. The dense tannins are finely balanced with fresh acidity and a long-lasting aftertaste. Impressive.

91

**92 Beresan 2006 Sémillon (Walla Walla); \$18.** This is a really luscious wine—100% varietal—with unusual richness. The flavors are dense and detailed, a mix of sweet grain, clover and beeswax along with lychee, pear, white peach and pink grapefruit. Smooth and full-bodied, it keeps on going through a lingering, lightly honeyed finish. The label is a colorful drawing of a blonde angel surrounded by stars.

92

**95 Von Strasser 2005 Sori Bricco Vineyard Red Wine (Diamond Mountain); \$70.** From one of the oldest vineyards on Diamond Mountain, this Bordeaux blend is impressively powerful and balanced. Based on Cabernet, with small quantities of Merlot, Cab Franc and Petit Verdot, it has oak-influenced black and red currant, cassis, cherry, spicy plum pudding and sweet, smoky vanilla flavors, with a cedar, pencil-lead note reminiscent of a fine Pauillac. Lush now, it should develop well through 2015.

93

**94 Numanthia-Termes, S.L. 2005 Numanthia (Toro); \$60.** Worn leather, hickory and earth scents accent the deep fruit that Numanthia is known for. But it's the polished mouthfeel and consistent delivery of flavor and texture on this '05 that distinguishes it from so many big bombers from Toro. By the time it's done you hardly feel the tannins on the finish, which lingers comfortably for minutes. Excellent wine to drink over the next six years. Imported by Jorge Ordoñez Selections.

94

**95 Jean-Baptiste Adam 2005 Sélection de Grains Nobles Gewürztraminer (Alsace); \$90/500 ml.** With its distinctive bouquet of rose petals and lychee fruit, this dessert wine's Gewürztraminer character shines clearly through a modest veil of botrytis. It's sweet and viscous without being overly heavy, with a long, spice-driven finish. Tremendous stuff, with a wonderful sense of harmony and balance. Imported by Billington Imports.

95

**95 Tenuta Sette Ponti 2005 Oreno (Toscana); \$93.** A blockbuster wine with finely tuned renderings of coffee, tobacco, spice and leather, Oreno requires a rare steak cooked on a mesquite grill or something similarly big and bold. In the mouth, this Sangiovese-Merlot-Cabernet blend delivers loads of spice that leaves a lasting impression thanks its firm tannins. Drink after 2010. Imported by Kobrand.

96

**95 Breggo 2006 Savoy Vineyard Pinot Noir (Anderson Valley); \$55.** If you know Goldeneye's new Gowen Creek bottling, this is a near identical Pinot, and little wonder, for the vineyards are right next to each other. This wine dazzles with exotic, feral notes of wild blackberries and blueberries, and forest scents of pine needle, roasted mushroom, grilled

meat, chocolate, anise, cinnamon, nutmeg and coriander. New oak adds even richer nuances of smoky caramel and vanilla to this compelling wine.

97

**94 Château Brane-Cantenac 2005 Margaux; \$70.** The fruit has become the main attraction here—layers of ripeness, tempered with an elegant smoothness. The tannins are certainly present in this powerful wine, but they are here to lend support, not dominate. With herbs and very clean black fruits, this is a wine to follow.

98

**92 Passing Clouds 2005 Reserve Shiraz (Bendigo); \$30.** Like the 2003, this is a big, no-holds-barred Shiraz. The 2005 is packed with cassis and blueberry fruit, framed by chocolate and vanilla notes and finishes with plenty of spicy complexity and some slightly rough tannins. Drink 2010–2020. Imported by Southern Starz, Inc.

99

**96 Ojai 2005 Fe Ciega Vineyard Pinot Noir (Sta. Rita Hills); \$56.** This wine is as fine as anything from Santa Rita Hills. Although it's young and tight now, its future is assured by the brilliant combination of audacious fruit and classic structure. The blackberry, currant, cherry, anise and clove flavors are wrapped into rich, silky tannins and brightened with crisp acidity. Best now, with decanting, and for the next 6–8 years.

100

**93 Château La Lagune 2004 Haut-Médoc; \$45.** The freshness of 2004 is the hallmark of this deliciously ripe but elegant wine. It is packed with juicy red berry fruits, giving richness but vibrant acidity. **WE**