A FIRST LOOK AT OUR EDITORS' MOST EXCITING NEW WINES

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Wine Spectator Insider

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WINE SPECTATOR's *Insider* concentrates on California and France this week, looking at a range of wines from all over the Golden State as well as from France's Rhône Valley. James Laube reviews Napa Cabernets and an outstanding Sonoma Chardonnay here, Tim Fish highlights a Russian River Valley Zinfandel and Shafer's 2007 Napa Valley Merlot, and MaryAnn Worobiec finds an elegant Pinot Noir from Carneros.

James Molesworth continues to evaluate the 2007 vintage from the Rhône Valley. He reviews 21 wines from the Rhône in this edition, including wines from Côte-Rôtie, Hermitage, Cornas, Gigondas and St.-Joseph. This week's three top-scoring wines come from leading Rhône domaines M. Chapoutier and Jean-Luc Colombo; you'll find all three among the Hot Wines, on page 4.

California

BARNETT

Cabernet Sauvignon Spring Mountain District Rattlesnake Hill 2007

92 points | $125 | 565 cases made | Red

Rich and generous, with firm, ripe, concentrated currant, wild berry and black cherry fruit that's focused, deep and persistent, ending with a long, lingering finish. Best from 2011 through 2018.—*J.L.*

CARLISLE

Zinfandel Russian River Valley Carlisle Vineyard 2007

92 points | $40 | 550 cases made | Red

Deeply structured yet light on its feet, with wild berry and licorice aromas that lead to fleshy black cherry and smoky pepper flavors framed by lively acidity. Needs time to open up in the glass. Drink now through 2016.—*T.F.*

HOURGLASS

Cabernet Franc Napa Valley Blueline Vineyard 2007

92 points | $135 | 200 cases made | Red

Rich and distinctive, with layered currant, blueberry, charcoal-laced mocha, dried herb, cedar and spice. Full-blown, deep and concentrated, yet elegant, ending with firm tannins that give the flavors traction. Drink now through 2016.—*J.L.*

MOUNT EDEN

Pinot Noir Santa Cruz Mountains 2007

92 points | $48 | 668 cases made | Red

Complex and full-bodied, showing savory herb, dried cherry and berry fruit, with anise, mineral and tobacco leaf, gaining depth and nuance and finishing with firm, minerally tannins. Drink now through 2017.—*J.L.*

NICHOLSON RANCH

Chardonnay Sonoma Valley Cuvée Natalie Estate 2007

92 points | $48 | 270 cases made | White

Smooth-textured, creamy and full-bodied, with rich tropical fruit, pear, fig and melon flavors that are pure, ripe, focused and lingering. Drink now through 2014.—*J.L.*

SANFORD

Pinot Noir Sta. Rita Hills La Rinconada Vineyard 2007

92 points | $50 | 865 cases made | Red

Tight, focused, complex and layered, this is Burgundian in its structure, with full-bodied plum, black cherry, wild berry, floral and spicy, peppery scents that are delivered on a beam of acidity. Drink now through 2016.—*J.L.*

SHAFER
Merlot Napa Valley 2007
92 points | $48 | 10,000 cases made | Red

Dark and muscular, with blackberry and graphite aromas and youthful, concentrated black cherry and mocha fruit that show notes of roasted herb and a hint of game. Drink now through.—*T.F.*

SONNET
Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Amber Ridge Vineyard 2007
92 points | $40 | 220 cases made | Red

Fresh, ripe plum, black cherry and raspberry scents are pure, complex and full-bodied, with a hint of fresh earth that folds over nicely on the palate, gaining body, depth, traction and persistence. Drink now through 2017.—*J.L.*

SPOTTSWOODE
Cabernet Sauvignon St. Helena Family Estate Grown 2006
92 points | $130 | 2,743 cases made | Red

Drying herb, mineral and graphite join grilled meat and dried currant in this taut, tannic, structured and backward youngster. Firmly tannic and chewy, very concentrated and tightly wound. Best from 2011 through 2018.—*J.L.*

BENOVIA
Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Bella Una 2007
91 points | $58 | 195 cases made | Red

Fragrant, delicate, spicy and structured, this full-bodied Pinot shows spice, plum, black cherry, wild berry and floral scents, gaining richness and depth on the finish. Drink now through 2016.—*J.L.*

BLUE FARM
Pinot Noir Carneros Anne Katherina Vineyard 2007
91 points | $48 | 240 cases made | Red

Effusively fragrant, with eucalyptus and lavender notes and a core of ripe, plush, fleshy wild berry, cherry and cassis flavors. Lovely in its grace and elegance, with a persistent finish. Drink now through 2016.—*M.W.*

CELANI FAMILY
Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley 2007
91 points | $80 | 957 cases made | Red

Intense and notably minty, this is full-bodied, dense and concentrated, offering a tightly wound, extracted and tannic mix of dried currant, herb, black licorice and mineral, ending with a firm wall of tannins. Best from 2011 through 2019.—*J.L.*

CELANI FAMILY
Tenacious Napa Valley 2007
91 points | $60 | 1,960 cases made | Red

Rich and sleek, yet beautifully structured. Red currant and blueberry aromas lead to complex and focused flavors of black cherry, roasted coffee and spicy dried herbs. Ripe tannins firm up the finish. Merlot, Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot. Best from 2012 through 2016.—*T.F.*

CHALK HILL
Furth Sonoma County 2006
91 points | $150 | 152 cases made | Red

Firm, intense and concentrated, with a core of dense dried currant, graphite, pencil lead and tobacco leaf, full-bodied, tight and focused, ending with chewy but ripe tannins. Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Malbec and Petit Verdot. Best from 2011 through 2018.—*J.L.*

NICKEL & NICKEL
Cabernet Sauvignon Oakville John C. Sullenger Vineyard 2006
91 points | $90 | 3,108 cases made | Red

Firmly tannic and tightly wound, serving a mix of cedar, dried currant, graphite and mineral, at points turning juicy and then firming on the finish, Bordeaux-like in its structure and concentration. Best from 2011 through 2018.—*J.L.*

France
Rhône

M. CHAPOUTIER
Ermitage Le Méal 2007
93 points | $210 | 80 cases imported | Red

Ripe and polished for the vintage, with sleek raspberry and black currant fruit supported by cocoa powder and graphite notes. Shows lingering charcoal and herb hints on the finish. Drink now through 2013.—*J.M.*

JEAN-LUC COLOMBO
Cornas La Louvée 2007
93 points | $83 | 125 cases imported | Red

Very concentrated, with black currant, fig and acai berry flavors carried by bright, racy iron and chalk notes. The long, intense finish lets violet and lavender notes streak through. Best from 2011 through 2018.—*J.M.*

JEAN-LUC COLOMBO
Cornas Les Ruchets 2007
93 points | $83 | 175 cases imported | Red

Dark and chewy for now, with mesquite and roasted fig notes tumbling around with bittersweet cocoa, truffle and mulled currant notes. Stays burly through the finish, but the tannins are well-integrated for cellaring. Best from 2011 through 2017.—*J.M.*

FRANCK BALTHAZAR
Cornas Cuvée Casimir Balthazar 2007
92 points | $35 | 56 cases imported | Red

This is old school, with lots of grilled thyme and dried lavender notes, followed by roasted fig, coffee, game and olive flavors. All of it is backed by burly-textured tannins and a taut, chalky minerality. Best from 2011 through 2017.—*J.M.*

M. CHAPOUTIER
Côte-Rôtie La Mordorée 2007
92 points | $175 | 81 cases imported | Red

This has good depth and grip, with a strong briary edge carrying the iron, black olive, maduro tobacco, bittersweet cocoa, mulled plum and black cherry notes. The tangy finish has solid length. Drink now through 2012.—*J.M.*

M. CHAPOUTIER
Hermitage Monier de la Sizerrane 2007
92 points | $112 | 150 cases imported | Red

This has a core of dark plum and mulled spice notes, while slightly edgy tobacco and olive notes flitter around the edges. There's latent grip, with a smoldering charcoal hint on the finish. Drink now through 2014.—*J.M.*

M. CHAPOUTIER
St.-Joseph Les Granits 2007
92 points | $55 | 138 cases imported | Red

This has depth for the vintage, with plum sauce, violet, blackberry and mulled cherry notes laced with incense and graphite. The long finish has a nice velvety feel, with a buried iron note buried. Drink now through 2012.—*J.M.*

JEAN-LUC COLOMBO
Cornas Terres Brûlées 2007
92 points | $70 | 125 cases imported | Red

This is strong, with an impressive core of melted black licorice, dark plum, currant and maduro tobacco all laced together with a dark, loamy note. There's a polished mouthfeel, but also brooding intensity. Best from 2011 through 2017.—*J.M.*

YVES CUILLERON
St.-Joseph Les Serines 2007
92 points | $52 | 1,833 cases made | Red

This has impressive drive, depth and focus for the vintage, with layers of dark fig and black cherry fruit offset by a vibrant, iron-filled spine. Notes of espresso and violet fill in on the lengthy, fleshy finish. Drink now through 2013.—*J.M.*

PAUL JABOULET AÎNÉ
Cornas Domaine de St.-Pierre 2007
92 points | $120 | 415 cases made | Red

Shows a bright floral hint at first before quickly giving way to a concentrated, tangy mix of red and black cherry and currant fruit, woven with incense, black tea, sweet tapenade and tobacco. There's a rugged hint in the background, but the finish is refined overall. Best from 2011 through 2017.—*J.M.*

PAUL JABOULET AÎNÉ
Hermitage La Chapelle 2007
92 points | $350 | NA cases made | Red

Sleek and primal now, with a beam of glistening raspberry and red currant fruit running over well-integrated iron, black tea and roasted vanilla bean notes. Stays well-focused on the finish. Drink now through 2014.—*J.M.*

M. CHAPOUTIER
Cornas Les Arènes 2007
91 points | $69 | 75 cases imported | Red

Taut and nicely defined, with a chalky exterior to the black cherry, tobacco and red licorice notes. A racy edge frames the olive-tinged finish. There's minerally grip, but this is very fresh. Drink now through 2015.—*J.M.*

M. CHAPOUTIER
Côte-Rôtie Les Bécasses 2007
91 points | $98 | 75 cases imported | Red

Offers a juicy mix of olive, tobacco and mulled black cherry fruit, with iron and cocoa notes chiming in on the solid, medium-weight finish. Should open a touch more with cellaring. Drink now through 2012.—*J.M.*

JEAN-LUC COLOMBO
St.-Joseph Les Lauves 2007
91 points | $38 | 100 cases imported | Red

Pure and focused, with a racy beam of black and red currant fruit laced with fig paste, cocoa powder and mulled spice notes. A briar hint extends the iron-tinged finish. Drink now through 2011.—*J.M.*

GABRIEL MEFFRE
Gigondas Domaine de Longue Toque 2007
91 points | $35 | 140 cases imported | Red

This has gorgeous purity, with a silky, racy beam of red plum, red currant and black cherry fruit that just sails along beautifully, while hints of iron and incense chime in on the long finish. Seamless and very fresh. Drink now through 2014.—*J.M.*

YVES CUILLERON
St.-Joseph L'Amarybelle 2007
91 points | $46 | 2,933 cases made | Red

A modern style, with toasty espresso and bittersweet cocoa aromas backed by dark plum and ripe blackberry fruit. Long and velvety on the finish, with alluring sanguine and black tea hints. Drink now through 2011.—*J.M.*

PAUL JABOULET AÎNÉ
Crozes-Hermitage Domaine de Roure 2007
90 points | $80 | 415 cases made | Red

This has a solid core of raspberry, mulled currant and spice flavors laced with a tangy black licorice note. The juicy, brambly finish has nice length. Drink now through 2011.—*J.M.*

NICOLAS JABOULET-PERRIN FRÈRES
St.-Joseph 2007
90 points | $NA | 1,208 cases made | Red

Still a touch tight, with racy acidity carrying the mix of blackberry, red currant and spice cake notes, while a briary edge frames the tangy finish. Should flesh out nicely with brief cellaring. Drink now through 2012.—*J.M.*

HOT WINES

These are the most exciting discoveries from our editors' most recent tastings, published exclusively in *Wine Spectator* Insider. They are high-scoring, low-production wines from around the world that may be difficult to find, but are worth seeking out.

M. CHAPOUTIER

Ermitage L'Ermite 2007

94 points | $305 | 505 cases made | Red

This has depth, length and character, with mouthfilling blackberry, raspberry and cherry fruit flavors supported by bright acidity. The long, minerally spine lets additional cherry pit, blood orange and espresso notes chime in. Still a touch raw in a youthful way, so let this settle in. Best from 2011 through 2017. *From France.—J.M.*

M. CHAPOUTIER

Ermitage Le Pavillon 2007

94 points | $250 | 907 cases made | Red

Shows the zesty loganberry, raspberry and boysenberry fruit of the vintage with added depth and flesh, while black tea, pastis and briar notes fill in on the nicely grippy finish. There's impressive depth through the finish. Drink now through 2016. *From France.—J.M.*

JEAN-LUC COLOMBO

Cornas Vallon de l'Aigle 2007

94 points | $120 | 50 cases imported | Red

This has lots of range, with crushed plum, raised fig and mulled blackberry fruit flavors all mingling with spice, red licorice and sweet tapenade notes. The long, driven finish shows the chalky side of the appellation, without being overly severe. Very impressive. Formerly the Force One bottling. Drink now through 2018. *From France.—J.M.*

HOURGLASS

Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley Blueline Vineyard 2007

93 points | $125 | 750 cases made | Red

Weaves together a complex array of flavors, from currant, blueberry, black licorice and damp earth to floral, spice and cedar. Full-bodied, intense, concentrated and persistent, both powerful and refined. Best from 2011 through 2018. *From California.—J.L.*

WINE SPECTATOR'S TASTERS

The Most Experienced Team of Wine Journalists in the World

Wine Spectator's tasting staff includes 14 people in three offices. They work together to review more than 18,000 wines each year, more than any other publication. Together, our seven senior tasters count more than 140 years of tasting experience.

We always taste wine blind in our offices in Napa, New York and Tuscany. This is your guarantee that our reviews are fair and objective, and that a wine's reputation or price does not influence its score. Each editor specializes in the wines of specific regions; their initials identify the taster of each wine reviewed. We score wines using the 100-point scale, explained below.

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***Wine Spectator's* 100-Point Scale**

95–100	Classic
90–94	Outstanding
85–89	Very good
80–84	Good
75–79	Mediocre
50–74	Not recommended