

Wine Spectator Insider

Marvin R. Shanken *Editor and Publisher*

A Members-Only, Weekly Publication

WEST Coast wines dominate this week's edition of the *Wine Spectator Insider*, with four classic-rated wines among the more than 20 outstanding selections from California and Washington. James Laube reviews California Cabernets, Chardonnays, Syrahs and more. You'll find a 2006 Napa Valley Cabernet that earned 97 points among the Hot Wines, on page 4. From Washington, Harvey Steiman's latest Syrah and Cabernet reviews are in for some of the state's top wineries, including Quilceda Creek. Official scores for Januik's recently released Cabernets are here as well; for more on Januik, including notes on a vertical tasting, see Steiman's blog entry today.

Also in this issue, Steiman covers 2007 Australian Shiraz, including five outstanding selections from Two Hands, and James Molesworth reviews six red wines from France's Rhône Valley.

Australia

TWO HANDS

Shiraz Barossa Valley Bella's Garden 2007

94 points | \$60 | 4,000 cases imported | Red

Ripe, fleshy and generous, but not nearly over the top, with gorgeous cherry, pomegranate, black olive and bay leaf flavors arching beautifully and swirling through the long, supple finish. Best from 2010 through 2017.—*H.S.*

TWO HANDS

Shiraz McLaren Vale Lily's Garden 2007

93 points | \$60 | 1,500 cases imported | Red

Ripe and peppery, with a spicy note weaving over the black cherry, dried tomato, licorice and mint flavors that keep pulsing through the long, expressive finish. Best from 2010 through 2017.—*H.S.*

TWO HANDS

Shiraz Clare Valley Samantha's Garden 2007

92 points | \$60 | 90 cases imported | Red

Shows density and grace, with mineral notes weaving through the blackberry and dark plum flavors, finishing tight and harmonious. The tannins are slightly prickly, requiring time to soften. Best from 2010 through 2017.—*H.S.*

TWO HANDS

Shiraz Heathcote Max's Garden 2007

91 points | \$60 | 150 cases imported | Red

Dense, focused and juicy with acidity that balances against ripe cherry and raspberry flavors, fitting in mineral notes as the finish lingers against fine tannins. Best from 2011 through 2017.—*H.S.*

TWO HANDS

Shiraz Padthaway Sophie's Garden 2007

91 points | \$60 | 175 cases imported | Red

Ripe and focused, delivering an explosive mouthful of black cherry, blackberry and black pepper flavors, with an earthy edge to the sweet fruit as this lingers on the big, rich finish. Drink now through 2015.—*H.S.*

JIM BARRY

Shiraz Clare Valley The Lodge Hill 2007

90 points | \$20 | 7,000 cases imported | Red

Polished, focused and appealing for its blackberry and white pepper flavors. Finishes harmoniously, with well-buffed tannins. Drink now through 2014.—*H.S.*

California

JEMROSE

Gloria's Gem Bennett Valley 2006
94 points | \$75 | 48 cases made | Red

Delivers a firm, ripe, intense mix of pepper, bay leaf, spice and wild berry fruit that's tight, focused, intense and concentrated, ending with chewy tannins and a nice burst of fruit. Syrah and Merlot. Drink now through 2014.—*J.L.*

RODNEY STRONG

Chardonnay Russian River Valley Reserve 2006
94 points | \$40 | 2,448 cases made | White

Wonderful perfumed aromas fold over to the palate, which is full-bodied and ultrarich without being heavy, delivering tiers of ripe fig, apricot and green apple, shaded by spicy, toasty oak. Better than previously reviewed. Drink now through 2012.—*J.L.*

BUCCELLA

Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley 2006
93 points | \$135 | 792 cases made | Red

Tight, dense and concentrated, with a tight mix of wild and black-berry fruit that's both powerful and restrained, slowly unfolding to offer spice, mineral, sage and iodine. The long, persistent finish is framed by trim tannins. Best from 2010 through 2017.—*J.L.*

DUCHAMP

Syrah Dry Creek Valley Cuvée Trouvée 2006
93 points | \$38 | 300 cases made | Red

Intense and powerful, with a rich mix of firm wild berry, black cherry, pepper and spice, gaining depth and strength and picking up tar and black licorice flavors that add dimension. Drink now through 2015.—*J.L.*

DUCHAMP

Syrah Dry Creek Valley Grand Master 2006
93 points | \$55 | 175 cases made | Red

A big, powerful, flavorful expression of Syrah, with intense berry, spice, pepper and herb-sage notes that are full-bodied and pick up depth and richness on the finish. Drink now through 2014.—*J.L.*

HDV

Chardonnay Carneros Hyde Vineyard 2006
93 points | \$60 | 1,562 cases made | White

Tight and focused, delivering a beam of lime, citrus and green apple fruit that's crisp and lively, gaining depth and a mineral nuance on the long finish. Drink now through 2012.—*J.L.*

MARTINELLI

Syrah Russian River Valley Zio Tony Ranch
Gianna Marie 2006
93 points | \$75 | 305 cases made | Red

A big yet balanced wine, savory with herb, wild berry and huckleberry fruit is pure, intense, spicy and beefy. Full-bodied, this returns to its beef stew touches. Drink now through 2015.—*J.L.*

PRIDE

Chardonnay Sonoma County Vintner Select Cuvée 2007
93 points | \$47 | 234 cases made | White

Starts out with subtle baked apple, fig, spice and buttery oak and then builds intensity and depth, keeping its focus. Full-bodied and concentrated, yet light on its feet. Drink now through 2012.—*J.L.*

RIDGE

Chardonnay Santa Cruz Mountains Santa Cruz Mountains Estate 2007
93 points | \$40 | 4,000 cases made | White

Combines richness with an elegant, delicate mouthfeel, showing deep layers of ripe fig, honeydew melon, ripe green pear and smoky oak. Balanced, focused, pure and lingering. Drink now through 2013.—*J.L.*

SHAFER

Chardonnay Napa Valley Carneros Red Shoulder Ranch 2007
93 points | \$48 | 5,500 cases made | White

Clean, crisp and flinty, with a mix of green apple, lime, quince and spicy hazelnut notes that are pure and focused, gaining depth on the finish. Drink now through 2012.—*J.L.*

ERNA SCHEIN

Fat Boy Napa Valley 2006
92 points | \$75 | 375 cases made | Red

Sleek and stylish, yet complex, offering red currant, clove and spice notes, with rich, layered black cherry, mocha and espresso flavors that take on momentum toward ripe but deep tannins. Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Petit Verdot and Cabernet Franc. Drink now through 2014.—*T.F.*

FOG CREST

Chardonnay Russian River Valley 2006
92 points | \$45 | 800 cases made | White

Beautifully defined flavors of pure, rich pear, fig and honeydew melon are shaded by light spicy, toasty oak. Builds complexity and depth on the finish, which is long and detailed. Drink now through 2012.—*J.L.*

France Rhône

FRANCK BALTHAZAR

Cornas Cuvée Casimir Balthazar 2006
93 points | \$55 | 25 cases imported | Red

This is loaded with dark fig, currant paste, Turkish coffee and bittersweet cocoa notes, all offset by hints of braised chestnut, black olive and mineral. The long, muscular finish shows a taut, chalky spine and admirable depth for the vintage. Impressive. A new domaine to watch. Best from 2010 through 2018.—*J.M.*

PERRIN & FILS

Gigondas Vieilles Vignes 2006

92 points | \$84 | 82 cases made | Red

Still tight, but with lots of fig, hoisin sauce, raspberry ganache, incense and mesquite notes waiting to emerge fully. This has silky tannins and a long, perfumed finish. There's also great underlying acidity. Best from 2010 through 2013.—*J.M.*

JEAN-LOUIS CHAVE SÉLECTION

St.-Joseph Offerus 2006

91 points | \$29 | 1,500 cases imported | Red

Very bright and racy, with mouthwatering damson plum, crushed cherry, lavender, iron and tobacco notes that race through the well-focused finish. Long and pure, with a lingering spice note. Drink now through 2011.—*J.M.*

E. GUIGAL

St.-Joseph 2005

91 points | \$30 | 7080 cases made | Red

Ripe, with solid grip to the plum sauce, fig, cocoa powder and incense notes that stay powerful through the smoky, mineral finish. This has a nice muscular, grippy feel. Drink now through 2012.—*J.M.*

DOMAINE DES HAUTS CHÂSSIS

Crozes-Hermitage Les Galets 2007

91 points | \$30 | 700 cases imported | Red

This is really fresh, with very silky blackberry and fig fruit liberally laced with iron, sanguine and black tea notes. The long, tangy finish brings you back for more. Drink now through 2013.—*J.M.*

PERRIN & FILS

Côtes du Rhône-Villages Cairanne Peyre Blanche 2007

91 points | \$25 | 2,916 cases made | Red

Still dark and tight, but with a great core of racy fig, graphite and blackberry confiture notes pushed by a long, mineral- and charcoal-tinged finish. Just needs brief cellaring to stretch out fully. Drink now through 2010.—*J.M.*

Washington

K

Syrah Walla Walla Valley Morrison Lane 2006

94 points | \$45 | 250 cases made | Red

Big, brawny and generous, delivering a huge mouthful of tar- and black olive-accented plum and currant flavors, coalescing into a rich, complex finish. A sizable wine with poise. Best from 2011 through 2016.—*H.S.*

K

Syrah Walla Walla Valley Phil Lane 2006

94 points | \$70 | 140 cases made | Red

Rich, ripe and generous with its spicy green and black olive flavors, which weave through plum, blackberry and wet stone character that remains powerful through the deftly balanced finish. The tannins need time to absorb. Best from 2011 through 2016.—*H.S.*

QUILCEDA CREEK

Cabernet Sauvignon Columbia Valley 2006

94 points | \$125 | 3,200 cases made | Red

Very ripe and generous. Not a big wine, but brims with plum, currant, black olive, cedar and roasted meat flavors, all playing against crisp tannins and lingering on the tight finish. Needs time in the cellar in order to open and flourish. Best from 2012 through 2020.—*H.S.*

K

Syrah Wahluke Slope The Deal Sundance Vineyard 2006

93 points | \$35 | 440 cases made | Red

Rich, ripe and distinctive for the tarry, smoky dark chocolate and black olive character that weaves through blackberry and ripe cherry fruit, all of it mingling on the solid, well-formed finish. Best from 2011 through 2016.—*H.S.*

JANUIK

Cabernet Sauvignon Columbia Valley 2006

92 points | \$30 | 1,672 cases made | Red

Chunky and chewy, with a stylish core of red berry, red currant and cherry fruit poking through a layer of prickly tannins. Needs time to soften, but this should get there. The finish just doesn't quit. Best after 2012.—*H.S.*

JANUIK

Cabernet Sauvignon Horse Heaven Hills Champoux Vineyard 2006

92 points | \$50 | 415 cases made | Red

Supple, broad and generous, offering a plush mouthful of mineral-accented plum, currant and peppery spice flavors, lingering on the juicy, poised finish. A big wine with refinement. Drink now through 2016.—*H.S.*

JANUIK

Syrah Columbia Valley Lewis Vineyard 2006

92 points | \$30 | 434 cases made | Red

Smooth, round and distinctive for its tarry, licorice-accented blackberry and dried currant flavors, lingering on the well-formed, complex finish. The tannins are well-integrated. Best from 2010 through 2016.—*H.S.*

K

Ovide En Cerise Walla Walla Valley 2006

92 points | \$60 | 215 cases made | Red

Dense, ripe and chewy, this is packed with black cherry, black plum and licorice flavors, hinting at savory herbs and charred meat as the finish rolls on. Complex and well-structured, this needs time to flourish. Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah. Best from 2010 through 2016.—*H.S.*

K

The Creator Walla Walla Valley 2006

91 points | \$50 | 365 cases made | Red

Dark and chewy, this is dense with blackberry, currant and tar flavors, glowing and pulsing against a layer of smoky tannins. Shows a lot of life. Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah. Best from 2011 through 2018.—*H.S.*

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.

HOURLASS

Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley 2006
97 points | \$135 | 700 cases made | Red

A stunning, seductive style that features layers of creamy oak, dried currant, plum and mocha. Turns smooth and polished, unlocking doors of hazelnut and spice and ending with a long, full-blown finish. Drink now through 2017. *From California.*—J.L.

K

Syrah Walla Walla Valley Cougar Hills 2006
95 points | \$50 | 260 cases made | Red

Big, dense and complex, this hits hard, then backs off, leaving a trail of plum, blackberry, black olive, smoke and mineral flavors that linger forever. Tannins are present and crisp, but don't get in the way. Best from 2012 through 2018. *From Washington.*—H.S.

KAZMER & BLAISE

Chardonnay Carneros Boonfly's Hill 2006
95 points | \$50 | 90 cases made | White

Deliciously complex, rich and layered, with a mix of fig, apricot, spice and smoky, toasty oak, all fanning out to subtle nuances and ending with a wonderful finish. Drink now through 2014. *From California.*—J.L.

LONDER

Chardonnay Anderson Valley Corby Vineyards 2007
95 points | \$30 | 342 cases made | White

Offers wonderful intensity and purity of fruit, with ripe, rich, zesty green apple, tangerine, nectarine and subtle mineral notes, followed by a long, lively, engaging finish. There's no oak to speak of. Drink now through 2013. *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 four 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 San Francisco, Napa, New York and Tuscany, and in the vineyard regions of Europe. 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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Joined *Wine Spectator* in 1988. Tasting beat:
Austria, Greece, Portugal, southern France

Thomas Matthews Executive editor, New York
Joined *Wine Spectator* in 1988. Tasting beat:
New York, Spain

James Molesworth Senior editor, New York
Joined *Wine Spectator* in 1997. Tasting beat: Argentina, Chile,
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Bruce Sanderson Tasting director, New York
Joined *Wine Spectator* in 1993. Tasting beat: Burgundy,
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Harvey Steiman Editor at large, San Francisco
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Australia, New Zealand, Oregon, Washington

James Suckling European bureau chief, Italy
Joined *Wine Spectator* in 1981. Tasting beat:
Bordeaux, Italy, Port

Tasting staff:
Jo Cooke (Veneto),
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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