

WHITES

2008 Walnut Block Collectables Sauvignon Blanc

Single vineyard, estate SB from the land of the Kiwi for this price? Apparently I haven't seen it all. Aromas of fresh citrus and hay rise from the glass and lead to lovely flavors of gooseberries, tropical fruits, and light mineral notes on the palate. This wine achieves the perfect level of brightness and even has a round texture on the mid-palate. The fruit is really the star here with immensely enjoyable flavor.

2007 Hugel Gentil

This example from Hugel is a blend of Gewurztraminer, Pinot Gris, Riesling, Muscat, and Sylvaner. It has a lovely aroma of floral notes and wet stone. This blend is quite smooth on the palate with clean flavors of crisp apples and minerals. Well-balanced acidity is the string that ties the whole package together. The finish is crisp with medium length. Overall, a very enjoyable white.

2008 Edwards Reserve Chardonnay

This is a good everyday Chardonnay. It has pineapple and light oak (it sees 4-6 mo) aromas. It's medium-bodied with pleasantly ripe pear, apple, and light tropical flavors. The mid-palate shows a touch of oak and good acidity. The finish is slightly dry with crisp pineapple and toast flavors and good length. It's neither too light nor too heavy. It's just right.

2007 Snoqualmie Organic Chardonnay

I wasn't comfortable selling \$15 organic wines that tasted like they should be \$10. Now I have a plethora of great value organics like this one. It's a great everyday organic choice – clean, fresh, and no oak. Aromas of spice and pear rise from the glass and lead to pleasantly ripe apple fruit. It's medium-bodied with just enough weight on the palate. The finish is bright and juicy and a nice wake-up for the palate.

2005 Boschendal Chardonnay

This South African could easily pass for a California Chardonnay. It has a touch of oak with ripe pear flavors on the palate. The rich mouthfeel is tempered with just enough acid. It shows judicious use of oak and the finish is lengthy with toast and pineapple flavors. Very well-balanced with all the bells and whistles – what more could you want?

2009 Bosque Sauvignon Blanc

I'm finding more and more Chilean SB's to recommend. This example has a grassy, citrus aroma that leads to bright and juicy grapefruit flavors on the palate. The mid-palate show wet stone flavors and herbaceous hints. Serve this white at a warmer temperature to soften the brightness. The finish is lengthy with dry passion fruit flavors. Well done.

2007 Pillar Box White

At this current price, this white blend is an excellent complement to the red. Aromas of tropical fruit lead to ripe and round tropical fruit – mangoes and tangerines – flavors on the palate. This white shows good weight and has a very good ratio of ripeness to acidity. The mouthfeel is pleasantly soft and a joy to drink. Nice white blend.

2007 JJ Vincent Bourgogne

In the land of "Wine Geekdom" affordable white burgundy is a big deal. Not "current economic crisis" big, but big nonetheless. This example has no oak (read: better with food) and has lovely apple and almond aromas. It's clean on the palate with more fresh apple flavors tied together nicely with just the right amount of acidity. The finish is crisp with slightly creamy, citrus notes. Great Chardonnay!

2008 Falernia Pedro Ximenez

They had me at Pedro Ximenez, typically a variety used exclusively in sherry. Aromas of limes and tropical fruits emerged from the glass. This white is quite smooth on the palate with slightly bright, citrus and ripe, melon flavors. There's even a floral note, too. I like the melding of ripe and bright flavors in this wine – citrus and ripe tropical fruits. The finish shows even more floral notes with lime and almond as well. Overwhelmingly enjoyable wine!

2008 Olos Grillo

Obscure, Italian, white varietal? I'll take a dozen, please! Italy has so much to offer besides Pinot Grigio, so please indulge me. This Grillo from Sicily has a lovely aroma of ripe lemon and almond. It is VERY smooth and elegant on the palate with ripe lemon fruit coupled with a solid, slightly dry backbone. This white has good body, surprising richness, and a nice mouthfeel. The finish shows gobs of ripe, lemon curd and good length. Perfect alternative white!

2008 Mt. View Chardonnay

Here's a solid everyday drinker. Aromas of tropical fruit and bananas lead to pleasantly, smooth and perfectly ripe flavors of juicy apples. This wine is slightly ripe, but has plenty of acidity for balance. It's a clean Chardonnay with no oak and solid fruit. The finish shows more crisp fruit and good length. Good value!

2007 Zaca Mesa Viognier

This is simply a **BEAUTIFUL** representation of this varietal. Rich, tropical fruit aromas leap from the glass. This white is smooth and lush on the palate achieving the perfect combination of richness and dryness. Light honeysuckle and ripe tropical fruit flavors fill the palate. The finish is very lengthy with tangerine and mango flavors. Outstanding wine!

REDS

2008 Santa Julia Organic Malbec

I'm finding more affordable organic offerings, especially outside the US. This Malbec has a lovely aroma of pretty, berry fruits. It's surprisingly smooth and silky on the palate with lighter acidity and a thicker mouthfeel. Fresh berry flavors abound in this easy drinking red. A perfect quaffer.

2008 Latitud 34° Malbec

This is a wonderful everyday red from Argentina and a testament to the commercial success of the varietal. Fresh berry aromas rise from the glass and lead to slightly bright, juicy berry fruit on the palate. This wine sees no oak, so the fruit really shines. The mid-palate shows a hint of spice and cocoa, and the finish has light tannins and dark berry fruit. With flavors and balance like this, what's not to like?

2007 Pascual Reserve Tannat

Tannat is typically used as a blending grape in France, but grows quite well as a single varietal in Uruguay. This one has a perfumed aroma with tons of fresh cherry flavors. It's smooth on the palate with slightly bright, dried berry/ cherry fruit, good acidity, and spice notes. It's similar to a red Bordeaux, but with riper fruit. The finish is bright with juicy berry fruit and good length. A very flavorful and interesting wine!

Wine Enthusiast - 91 Points

2005 B Side Napa Cabernet

"Holds its own in a tasting of Napa Cabs that cost, three, four, even five times as much. Made with a drop of Petite Sirah, it's dry, firmly tannic and complex, with black currant, beef jerky, miso, pepper spice and smoky oak flavors. Best now and for a couple years."

2008 Ca N'Estrus Red

Another killer red from Spain. This is a blend of mostly Cab & Syrah with dollops of Merlot & Grenache. It has a big aroma of juicy, berry fruit. This wine is VERY thick & rich on the palate with dark berry fruit and hints of coffee, cocoa, and spice. There's enough acidity, so the fruit isn't overwhelming. The finish is lovely with pretty berry and violet notes and great length. Terrific wine and a **TREMENDOUS** value.

2007 Martius Selectus

This is a TREMENDOUS value from Montsant. It's a blend of Grenache, Carignan, and Syrah. It has a thick, berry liqueur-like aroma that's followed by gobs of "blue" fruits – blueberry and black raspberry – on the palate. This wine is quite viscous, but has plenty of acidity for balance and structure. The mid-palate shows a sherry-like spice component that's very interesting. The finish is quite lengthy with slightly bright black, berry fruit flavors. This is a high quality wine for a song!

2008 Mt. View Carneros Pinot Noir

Carneros Pinot Noir for this price? Welcome to Crazyville! This red starts with bright, red fruit aromas with hints of spice. It's VERY smooth on the palate with clean, dark red fruit flavors. This Pinot Noir has good body and a perfect softness on the mid-palate. The finish shows light tannins and rich, ripe strawberry fruit with great length. Gifts like this don't happen very often, so take full advantage.

2007 The Show Cabernet

Here's another winner from the boys at 3 Thieves winery. This California Cabernet has a lot to offer. It has a fresh berry aroma and is very smooth on the palate featuring pleasantly ripe cherry fruit and good acidity throughout. You'll find chocolate/cherry notes on the mid-palate. For an everyday quaffer this wine has great structure. The finish shows dried berry notes and good length. Nice wine!

2007 Camelot Merlot

One of the benefits of being a less popular varietal is better juice. Demand for Merlot is far less than its supply, so less expensive wines have access to better juice. This California Merlot is a perfect example of these economics. It's fresh and clean with slightly dark berry fruit that has just enough acidity for balance and structure. It's a perfect everyday red – great on the palate AND great on the wallet.

2004 Rocca Macie Fizzano

Rocca Macie offers an astounding value over its peers. This is a single vineyard Chianti Classico Riserva and no one comes even close to this price. Dark, rich aromas lead to smooth, clean, luxurious, cherry fruit with light hints of earth. It has perfect ripeness and very well-balanced acidity. The finish shows good grip, so you know it can age, and plenty of earthy, dried cherry fruit. Wonderful wine.

2006 R Collection Merlot

This is the style of Merlot that will bring the varietal back to prominence. Big aromas of dark, black fruit lead to big and burly flavors of rich, brambly, black fruits and cocoa on the palate. There's even a faint hint of underbrush, too. This wine shows good acidity and good grip. The finish is big as well with full-flavored dark plum, caramel, and toast notes. Great red – a Merlot for Cabernet drinkers.

2005 Mossback Chalk Hill Cabernet

This wine is an absolute steal given its pedigree – Chalk Hill isn't a slouch appellation. It starts with berry fruit aromas that turn to dried cherry, dust, and vanilla flavors on the palate. This wine has good structure and only gets better with aeration. The dried cherry flavors evolve into luscious black cherries that are perfectly ripe. The finish is dry with candied cherry and cedar flavors with very nice length. Given its price, this is a complex wine.

2006 Bookwalter Merlot

If you're going to pop the cork and immediately drink this wine then you're in for a uneventful experience. If you decant it and wait an hour before drinking you'll have a wonderful experience. Bookwalter makes BIG wines that need aeration or cellaring. This example has dark fruit and cocoa aromas that lead to lovely cherry fruit, coffee, and vanilla flavors. The acidity is balanced and this wine shows multiple layers of flavor. The finish has great length and plenty of dark chocolate and cherry fruit.

2007 Carr Pinot Noir

I've been looking for a solid Pinot Noir from the up-and-coming Sonoma Coast area. Enter Carr! This example has a light earth aroma and hints of smoke on the palate, but the concentrated, yet supple dark, red berry fruit fills the palate. The fruit is perfectly ripe and the acidity is well-balanced. The finish is expressive with complex, ripe, berry fruit flavors. Well done!

2007 Carr Napa Cabernet

The \$20 Napa Cabernet has become a benchmark item for me. I believe you should be able to buy a darn good wine for \$20. Enter Carr, the newest \$20 horse in my stable. Aromas of chocolate and cherry lead to a very smooth mouthfeel. Ripe cherry fruit and hints of cedar luxuriously fill the palate and are just bright enough for balance. There's a solid core of well-integrated tannins throughout with a very lengthy dark berry finish. Well done!

2006 Borgianni Chianti

This is an excellent example of a, somewhat, traditional Chianti. I say somewhat because it has all the "terroir" with riper fruit. Typical Chianti aromas of dried cherries, cedar, and herbs lead smooth and clean dried cherry flavors on the palate. The fruit component shows good ripeness and it's not too dry. The finish is a bit more rustic with light earth and mineral notes. Nice example of the region.

2007 Artesa Pinot Noir

I've always enjoyed this Pinot Noir vintage after vintage. The 2007 is no different. Aromas of dark red fruits lead to a smooth mouthfeel of soft berry/cherry fruit. There's even a hint of raspberry. The mid-palate is slightly bright with the acidity in good balance. This is a prettier style of pinot Noir with simply lovely flavors. The finish is quite lengthy with more berry fruit. Nice wine!

2007 Loggia Montepulciano

Of my Montepulciano offerings this is the most "rustic". Aromas of dark berry fruit, earth, and herbs rise from the glass. The fruit is bright on the palate with berry flavors coupled with more earth and dust flavors. This is definitely a "funkier" style, but it extremely well-structured AND well-balanced. Fruit, acidity, and ripeness are all harmonious. The finish shows drier tannins and plenty of dried cherry fruit.

2008 La Cartuja Priorat

This is a stellar entry level Priorat. Aromas of ripe, berry fruits with hints of spice lead to pretty and delicate dark berry flavors on the palate. There's even a pleasant touch of vanilla from oak aging. This wine has a smooth mouthfeel with balanced acidity as well. This wine has an outstanding fruit component, a trademark of the region. The finish shows good grip, balanced tannins, gobs of ripe fruit, and excellent length. Bravo!

2007 L.A. Cetto Petite Sirah

The two most popular beverages from Mexico are tequila and Corona – and now I've found a third. This Petite Sirah from Baja is outstanding. It has a wonderful aroma of fresh picked, dark berry fruit. It's rich and ripe on the palate with "blue" fruits – blueberry and blackberry – and hints of cocoa and violets. It has a heavier mouthfeel and very well-balanced acidity. The finish is lengthy with dark berry fruit and light spice notes. Great example of the varietal.

2008 Planeta Segreta Red

This red is what I'd call a Sicilian Bordeaux – Nero D'Avola, Syrah, Merlot, and Cabernet Franc. This blend starts with aromas of ripe, red berry fruit with hints of bell pepper. It's pleasantly juicy on the palate with red fruits – strawberry and raspberry – with "terroir" driven hints of herbs de Provence and earth. It has very good structure balancing copious fruit with enough acidity and tannins. The finish shows pretty, berry fruit flavors and good length. Interesting wine.

2005 Recchia Le Muraie Ripasso Valpolicella

Single vineyard Ripasso passed over, not Amarone skins, but Recioto (dessert Valpolicella) skins. And here's the best part – it's less than \$20! I've died and gone to heaven. Rich, ripe berry fruit aromas fill the glass and lead to smooth and elegant berry and spice flavors. Raisin, caramel, and earth flavors emerge on the mid-palate and the finish shows great fruit and length. This is a **STELLAR** example of the Ripasso style and a killer wine, too.

2003 Recchia Ca' Bertoldi Amarone

Single vineyard, estate Amarone at this price is positively insane. I tried looking for faults (like my mother said. "If it's too good to be true, it is."), but I came up empty. This wine is smooth and elegant on the palate with rich berry/"blue" fruits and violets. It's ripe and concentrated without overwhelming and shows **EXCELLENT** balance. The finish is VERY lengthy with concentrated, ripe, roasted, berry fruit. Wow!

2007 El Peral Reserva

Here's another incredible red from Argentina. It's roughly equal parts Cab, Merlot, and Malbec with aromas of brambly, berry fruit, spice, and cedar. It has a pleasantly soft mouthfeel with more "black" fruits and vanilla notes. This red has excellent structure with good acidity and grip. The finish is dry with very flavorful cherry fruit. Excellent blend!

2007 Ramsay Napa Merlot

Yeah for the red-headed stepchild! If Merlot wasn't out of favor then wines like this wouldn't; a.) Have this low price, and b.) Taste this good. It has smooth dark, plum fruit flavors with hints of vanilla. It shows perfect ripeness, enough acidity, and plenty of grip for the Cab-lover. The finish is solid with bright, juicy, dark berry fruit and just the right amount of tannins. Great wine, great location, and most importantly great price.

2008 Tamari Reserve Malbec

This is an excellent example of a higher quality Malbec. Dark berry fruit aromas with a touch of cocoa lead to pretty boysen-berry flavors on the palate. The mid-palate has rich, darker, berry fruit and nice acidity. This wine shows good complexity and will taste even better as it aerates. The finish is quite lengthy with huckle-berry and cocoa flavors. Great example of the varietal.

2007 Girard Old Vine Zinfandel

Here's nearly a perfect example of Zinfandel. Pretty, berry aromas rise from the glass and lead to wonderfully ripe, black raspberry, and violet flavors with slight hints of cocoa on the palate. This silky fruit is tempered with good acidity and integrated tannins. The finish shows judiciously ripe berry fruit and good length. Great Zin!

2005 Century Oak Reserve Cabernet

At its original price this was a good wine, at its new price this is a **GREAT** wine! Dark, brambly fruit aromas fill the glass and lead to smooth and rich blackberry fruit on the palate. This wine shows good ripeness coupled with well-balanced acidity. The finish has good tannic structure and bright, berry fruit and coffee notes.

2007 Tangle Oaks Napa Merlot

Here's a good testimonial to the resurgence in quality of Merlot. It starts with aromas of spices and dark plums. On the palate you'll find ripe plum and vanilla flavors and a wonderfully smooth mouthfeel. This wine has excellent ripeness and enough acidity for balance. The finish has caramel and coffee flavors and nice length. This is a great red.

ADVENTUROUS FINDS

2008 Savion Vouvray

I'm a big fan of French Chenin. Between the fruit and minerality, this is a white than can't be beat. Aromas of wet stone and crisp apple lead to concentrated honeyed pear and melon flavors on the palate. The fruit is slightly bright with good acidity throughout. This dry backbone is the glue that holds this wine together. The finish is bright and juicy with pleasantly ripe lemon and citrus flavors. Great wine.

The Wine Advocate - 93 Points

2007 Grand Bois Trois Sœurs

"The 2007 Trois Soeurs is a blend of 65% Grenache and the rest Syrah & Carignan, 1/3 is aged in older barrels for 4 months, and 2/3 in tank. A big, full-bodied style reveals delicious black currant and black cherry fruit along with hints of licorice, pepper, and spice box. This opulent Rhone should drink nicely for 3-4 years."

2007 Coroa Godello

Godello (go-day-yo) is an esoteric white varietal found in northern Spain and this example is one of the better ones. Steely aromas emerge with faint hints of almonds. It has a lovely fruit profile with tropical and passion fruit flavors. The mid-palate has a lush texture and pretty floral notes. This white has excellent balance and multiple layers of flavor. The finish has lengthy peach and stone fruit flavors. Overall, a great example of the varietal.

Wine Enthusiast - 91 Points

2006 Dominus Napanook

"It's tempting to think of this as a 2nd wine of Dominus, but this Cab-based Bordeaux blend has been trying to stand on its own. The '06 represents a step forward, and is the best release since '03. Dry and well-structured, it offers complex flavors of black currants and sweet grilled oak. Good now and beyond 2012."

2008 Domaine Bastide Roussanne

This is a terrific example of this varietal, which is used mostly as a blender in white Rhone. Fresh aromas of honeyed apples with floral notes rise from the glass. It's bright and juicy on the palate with no oak and ripe apple and peach flavors. There's a hint of almond on the mid-palate and the finish shows mineral notes and bright stone fruit flavors. Excellent representation of the varietal.

2006 Mont Marcal Brut

Vintage sparkling wine at this price is unheard. This vintage Cava has many of the same flavors of Champagne at a third the price. Doughy, yeasty aromas (just like Champagne!) lead to crisp apple flavors on the palate. This vintage offering is pleasantly drier than the typical Cava also offering better structure and flavor. More yeast and citrus flavors arrive on the finish. Overall, a tremendous sparkler!