

## **WHITES**

### **2007 Ca'Bolani Pinot Grigio 375ml**

I love finding good half bottles. They fill a niche when one glass isn't enough and a bottle is too much. This example from Friuli has aromas of apples with hints of almonds. It's a pleasant, easy drinking white with apple flavors that turn to lemon fruit on the mid-palate. There's even a touch of mineral notes. The finish is slightly dry with ripe, citrus and almond flavors. A good example of the varietal.

### **2008 Parados Chardonnay**

This is a lovely Chardonnay featuring aromas of ripe stone fruit followed by ripe apple flavors on the palate. This white has an excellent mouth-feel with plenty of weight. The mid-palate shows light acidity and small spice/nutmeg notes. This wine is clean and very balanced with a perfect fruit component. Quite enjoyable!

### **2008 Scaia Bianca**

I'm finding more and more non-Pinot Grigio Italian whites to recommend. This blend of Garganega, Trebbiano, & Chard has a wonderful aroma of lime and crisp apple. It's smooth and clean on the palate with peach notes and a dry citrus backbone. The mid-palate is slightly round with bright flavors. The finish shows lime zest and stone fruits. Nice flavors!

### **2007 La Bastide Roussanne**

What a treat! It's virtually impossible to find good Roussanne – a varietal used almost exclusively for blending in the Rhone Valley – at a reasonable price. This example has lovely aromatics with honeyed apple flavors and light citrus notes. It's very elegant on the palate with clean, ripe apple fruit and light peach flavors on the mid-palate. This white is fresh with a pleasant brightness and perfectly ripe flavors. The finish is somewhat floral with crisp apple flavors,

### **2008 Tilia Torrontes**

I prefer this style of Torrontes – balanced. It's clean and fresh on the palate with a wonderful combination of citrus fruits and lightly perfumed flavors. Each exists without overshadowing the other. It has a bit of weight on the palate, so it's not overly dry. The texture is quite round and the fruit component is perfectly ripe. Overall, the parts of this value white are in harmony. Well done.

### **2009 Crios Torrontes**

#### **The Wine Advocate – 90 Points**

“Crios Torrontes remains one of Argentina's benchmarks for this variety. Sourced from 31-year-old vines in Cafayate (where the finest Torrontes grows), it displays a fragrant bouquet of spring flowers, honey, and tropical aromas. Medium-bodied and dry on the palate, it has ample fruit backed by vibrant acidity leading to a lengthy finish. Drink it over the next 2 years.”

## **REDS**

### **2008 Tilia Bonarda**

Bonarda is an up-and-coming varietal from Argentina because they're inexpensive and provide an excellent price/quality ratio. This one has meaty, red fruit flavors on the palate with perfect dryness for balance and structure. This is a full-flavored offering without the heavy tannins. The finish shows good berry fruit and length. This is quite an enjoyable red.

### **2007 Piccini Chianti**

I taste this Chianti every vintage and it's always a “Herb's Choice”. Their consistency is quite remarkable. It has an outstanding fruit component – clean, soft cherry fruit – with just enough acidity, so you know it's an Italian red, for balance. Piccini is a perfect everyday red that over-delivers in quality.

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### Lolonis Ladybug Red Cuvee 8

This is a great alternative red made predominantly from Carignane. It has a dark, red fruit aroma with clean flavors of dark berry fruit on the palate. This juicy red has a ton of flavor, but has good acidity as well. The finish is pleasantly dry with dried plum fruit and excellent length. Great wine!

### 2008 Santa Julia Organic Bonarda

I'm loving the organic line from Santa Julia – great wines and great values. This example has a lovely aroma of fresh berry fruit. It has a rich (read: expensive) mouthfeel with pretty blueberry and violet flavors. The mid-palate is quite thick and viscous and the finish shows “blue” fruits and more violets. Superb wine.

### 2006 Cuvaion Mt. Veeder Cabernet

This is a tremendous wine (& value!) from the Mt. Veeder appellation. Aromas of chocolate and cherry fill the glass and lead to a very smooth mouthfeel. This wine is lush on the palate with perfectly ripe, dark cherry and vanilla flavors. The finish shows very nice length, gobs of dark berry fruit, and integrated tannins. Overall, quite impressive.

### 2008 Matua Valley Pinot Noir

This is an excellent entry level New Zealand Pinot Noir – affordable and very good. Typical aromas of earth and bright berry fruit lead to bright and juicy red berry fruits with a hint of spice on the palate. NZ Pinots are inherently drier than their New World brethren, but this one has great balance between acidity and fruit. The finish shows more juicy fruit and good length.

### 2007 Domaine La Bastide Merlot

If you told me this Merlot was from France I wouldn't have believed it. Copious amounts of fruit with ample complexity – no way. This is an elegant Merlot (no this is NOT a typo). Aromas of berry fruit and cedar lead to smooth, ripe plum flavors on the palate. This red is clean and medium-dry with a terrific mouthfeel. The finish has plenty of juicy plum and dark cherry flavors. What an absolutely WONDERFUL surprise!

### 2007 Steak House Cabernet

I'm a big fan of the K.I.S.S. model – buy this wine, pair with steak. Simple, right? Fortunately the juice inside is quite good. This smooth and easy drinking Cabernet begins with aromas of dark cherry and vanilla. It's juicy on the palate with no green or overripe candied flavors. Gobs of soft cherry and berry fruit abound and are tamed by good acidity. The finish has good grip, but isn't astringent. Overall, a great everyday Cabernet!

### 2005 Orphelin Red

Ch. St. Michelle grows multiple varietals in varying lot sizes. Some of this wine makes it into the finished product and some is “orphaned”. Orphelin, the product of these lots, uses Rhone varietals and has a dense boysenberry aroma. It's smooth and clean on the palate with an easy-drinking style comprised of juicy berry flavors and hints of vanilla. The finish is bright with hints of spice and good length.

### NV Roncier Pinot Noir

This multi-vintage Pinot Noir is sourced from the vineyards around Mercury. Burgundy juice at domestic pricing is a steal. Aromas of dried cherry and vanilla lead to slightly bright, dried berry/cherry flavors and hints of earth on the palate. Even though it's fairly bright there's enough ripe fruit for balance. The finish has hints of earth and cranberry flavors. This is a perfect starter French Pinot Noir.

### 2006 Mettler OV Zinfandel

Due to pricing issues, this is my substitute Earthquake Zin. It's a monster. Dense, ripe, dark berry, jammy fruit fills the palate then leads to vanilla notes from the oak. This is a dense and dark Zin. with plenty of flavor and just enough acidity and tannic grip for balance. Neat wine.

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**2006 Righetti Ripasso**

This is my go-to Ripasso year in and year out – consistently superb quality. The 2006 has a complex aroma of roasted, dark cherry fruit and herb notes. It's smooth on the palate with medium-ripe cherry, earth, and mineral flavors. It has a pleasant brightness which also helps provide structure. The finish shows more herb notes and roasted berries. Great example of Ripasso.

**2007 Silvan Ridge Pinot Noir**

This is a great entry-level pinot Noir from Oregon. It starts with aromas of dark red fruits and spices. On the palate, you'll find bright and juicy red berry fruit with a touch of earthiness. There's even a hint of spice. The dry finish has good length, integrated tannins, and plenty of berry fruit. Nice wine!

**2007 Don Pascual Tannat**

Here are 2 checks for your wine journal: Tannat and Uruguay – a new varietal AND country. Tannat is a blending grape, but grows quite well 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 enjoyable wine!

**2007 Seven Terraces Pinot Noir**

I know this is sacrilegious, but I'm finding New Zealand Pinots are a good substitute for Burgundy. This example has a dried raspberry aroma with lightly, bright strawberry & raspberry fruit on the palate. It has great balance between earth notes and pretty fruit. It's a lovely wine.

**2005 Artesa Cabernet**

This multi-county (63% Napa, 37% Sonoma) Cabernet is a great value. Aromas of ripe, brambly fruit and Napa dust lead to concentrated blackberry fruit with underbrush notes. Balanced acidity and tannins with an incredibly smooth mouthfeel add to its appeal. The finish has great length and tons of cherry fruit. Great Cab!

**2007 Metairie Pinot Noir**

This un-oaked beauty is a treat. Aromas of bright cherries, herbs, and white pepper lead to rustic French flavors on the palate – bright raspberries and herbs de Provence. This everyday Pinot has great acid structure combined with great ripeness of fruit. The finish is very lengthy with pretty, berry notes.

**2007 Plungerhead OV Zinfandel**

This is a well-balanced, old vine, Lodi Zinfandel. It has a typical brambly aroma with hints of spice followed by lovely "blue" fruits, blueberry & black raspberry, and vanilla flavors on the palate. This wine is fairly clean, just the slightest touch of spice, with a smooth mouthfeel and juicy fruit. The finish shows more berry fruit and caramel notes. Nice Zinfandel.

**ADVENTUROUS**

**2007 Clos St-Jean Chat. du Pape Vieilles Vignes**

**The Wine Advocate – 96 Points**

"The special selection for Peter Weygandt, the 2007 Chateau du Pape Vieilles Vignes, ratchets up the level of succulence, juiciness, and opulence. It is a fabulous, compelling effort of multiple dimensions. Classic aromas and flavors of licorice, kirsch liqueur, balsam wood, and lavender are found in this enormously full-bodied wine along with unreal concentration and perfect balance. This astonishing effort should drink well for 20+ years."

**2006 Palacios Petalos**

**The Wine Advocate – 91 Points**

"The 2006 Petalos del Bierzo is purple-colored with a fragrant nose of violets, lavender, mulberry, and blueberry. Ripe, supple, and sweetly fruited, it will evolve for 2-3 years and drink well through 2015."

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### 2004 Finca Villacreces

#### The Wine Advocate – 95 Points

“The 2004 Tinto is 86% Tempranillo, 10% Cabernet & 4% Merlot fermented in barrel and aged in oak for 16 mo. Inky purple, it has an expressive bouquet of mocha/espresso, pain grille, graphite, wild blueberries, and blackberry liqueur. This is followed by a full-bodied, full-flavored, plush wine with layers of spicy black fruits, impeccable balance, and a long, pure finish. The tannins are well concealed but this superb effort should evolve for 4-6 yrs and drink well through 2027.”

### 2003 Pesquera Tinto

#### The Wine Advocate – 93 Points

“The 2004 Pesquera, from a great vintage, is opaque purple with a fragrant nose of lead pencil, earth, black currants, & blackberry liqueur that jumps from the glass. This is followed by a sexy wine with layered blue & black fruits intertwined with ripe tannins & good acidity. This superb, beautifully balanced effort should evolve for 4-6 yrs and drink well for another 10-15.”

### 2005 Artadia Vinas Gain

#### The Wine Advocate – 94 Points

“The 2005 Vinas Gain is produced from 100% Tempranillo with vines ranging from 40-60 yrs of age. The wine is aged for 12-14 mo. in oak. This entry-level wine from Artadi is an awesome value as well as mind-boggling in quality. Purple/ black in color, it offers up a killer perfume that is super-sexy. Among its elements are truffles, pencil lead, vanilla, cherry, and black raspberry jam. Full-bodied, the wine is opulent yet elegant, concentrated, and superbly balanced. There is enough structure to ensure 6-8 years of positive evolution and it should drink well through 2032.”

### 2008 Crios Rosé

#### The Wine Advocate – 90 Points

“The 2008 Rose of Malbec is a saignee of Malbec sourced from 30-year-old ungrafted vines. It exhibits a fragrant bouquet of cherry and wild strawberries leading to a medium-bodied, dry, concentrated wine with lots of spicy red fruits and excellent balance. Drink it over the next 12-18 months.”

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