

## **WHITES**

### **2008 Boschendal Sauvignon Blanc**

This is a great summer white from South Africa. It starts with aromas of crisp citrus fruits then leads to pleasantly ripe passion fruit flavors. This SB doesn't have any herbaceous notes or the typical band-aid flavors found in so many South African wines. The mid-palate is slightly round with a nice lengthy finish.

### **2008 Boschendal Chardonnay**

This is one of those Chards that smells "big" (i.e. has a ton of oak), but it quite well-balanced on the palate. Aromas of pineapple and oak lead to nice ripe fruit. Flavors of mangoes and tropical fruits fill the palate and are framed by just the right amount of acid. The finish is lengthy with more pineapple fruit. Nice Chardonnay.

### **2007 Del Rio Pinot Gris**

Even though this PG is technically from Oregon, I would classify it as a warmer weather version since the Rogue Valley is so far south. Aromas of peaches and melons fill the glass and lead to an interesting mix of flavors on the palate – juicy citrus notes, almonds, and minerals. It has a smoother, rounder mouthfeel and deftly balances juicy fruit with good acidity. If I didn't know better I'd say this was from northern Italy.

### **2009 Beaulieu Picpouil**

You have to love a grape whose name literally means "lip stinger". The 2009 version isn't a stinger and actually is a very refreshing warm weather white. Grass and melon aromas fill the glass. On the palate, you'll find crisp and clean melon fruit with nice citrus notes in the background. This is a fresh and easy drinking white that balances crisp acidity with pleasantly ripe fruit. Supremely enjoyable!

### **2009 Valdivieso Chardonnay**

I've always enjoyed the wines of Valdivieso, a perennial value-producer from Chile. This Chardonnay has good balance combining light oak notes with lovely pear flavors. It's medium-bodied with light tropical notes on the mid-palate. The finish is crisp and clean with medium-ripe citrus and apple flavors. For the money, a tremendous Chardonnay.

### **2007 Fournier Sauvignon Blanc**

If it hadn't seen Sauvignon Blanc on the front label I would have sworn that this was a Sancerre. Wet stone and mineral aromas comingle with big, bold citrus and grapefruit flavors. There's an element of mineral/slate throughout this wine that adds another level to this wine. The mid-palate shows more passion fruit and the finish is crisp and dry with gobs of citrus flavors. Tremendous wine for the money!

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### **2009 Valdivieso Sauvignon Blanc**

This is a great Chilean SB. Crisp and clean aromas with light mineral and herbaceous notes lead to fresh passion fruit and tropical flavors on the palate. This wine is bright and juicy with good ripeness as well as interesting mineral flavors. The finish is lively as well with bright melon and citrus flavors. Great cure for the hot weather.

### **2009 Ca' Del Sarto Pinot Grigio**

This is a great little value. Lemon curd and almond aromas fill your nose and lead to clean, medium-ripe, melon flavors on the palate. There's even a hint of mineral, so you know the grapes came from a good site. The finish shows fresh and juicy citrus flavors with medium length. Great wine!

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### 2008 Rock Point White

Here's a fun warm weather white that's a blend of Viognier & Muscat. It has an aroma of fresh fruit cocktail and flowers. This white has juicy flavors of apricots and fresh melon fruit with perfumed notes. It maintains a dry backbone, so this fruit isn't cloying. Overall, a refreshing sipper.

### 2008 Rock Point Pinot Grigio

Here's one for you – this is 100% estate grown Oregon Pinot Grigio! Given the price, I was as surprised as you. This white has clean and fresh flavors of light citrus fruit and hints of minerals. The mid-palate shows melon fruit and good ripeness. The texture is even appealing – present acidity, but nice roundness. The finish shows more citrus and good length. Tremendous wine for the money!

### 2008 Altanuta Pinot Grigio

This is a textbook PG – crisp aromas with clean and juicy apple and citrus fruit that's finds that perfect level of ripeness. It's medium-bodied with a pleasantly softer textured mid-palate. The finish is bright with light citrus notes and ok length. You can't go wrong with this one.

### 2008 L'Ecole #41 Semillon

Given the most white wines are either Chardonnay or Pinot Grigio, I love finding good, alternative whites like this Semillon. It has a crisp apple aroma with nice, clean fruit on the palate – flavors of citrus, apples, and lemons to name a few. The fruit is pleasantly ripe with pleasant brightness to provide structure. Remember; don't serve this one too cold. The finish has a slight creamy texture with pineapple and ripe, apple fruit and great length.

### 2008 The White One

Those Aussies are the undisputed champs at blending. This Semillon/Chard/ Arneis blend is no different. Crisp, tropical aromas lead to bright, tropical and lime fruit with a pleasantly round mid-palate that turns a touch brighter. The finish is dry with crisp, citrus flavors and good length. Nice wine!

### 2008 NO Sauvignon Blanc

After tasting this new vintage, I think I can just write "Ditto" for my review. This consistent winner belongs in the "Herb's Choice" Hall of Fame. The 2008 has pleasant citrus and grass aromas with a smooth mouthfeel and clean flavors of slightly bright citrus which turn to melon flavors on the mid-palate. This is a **VERY ENJOYABLE** Sauvignon Blanc. It's crisp, clean, and refreshing without tasting overly acidic. Once again, well done!

### 2009 Infamous Goose Sauvignon Blanc

Cuddly animal names "out", fowl names "in". I don't agree with the name, but I do agree with this wine. Pleasant grapefruit and grass aromas rise from the glass and lead to medium bright citrus flavors on the palate. There's a hint of New Zealand herbaceousness, but it's not overbearing. The finish is crisp with good melon and mineral notes. Overall, a very refreshing, easy to like white.

### 2008 Casa Bosque Chardonnay

A vintage change is always a dicey situation with a new label. The 2007 was fantastic and... drum roll please... so is the 2008. Whew! Bosque has done it again – slightly bright apple and peach flavors that are perfectly ripe with a pleasantly round mid-palate and good acidity. This is French in style (good structure, acid & little oak) with slightly riper fruit. This finish is medium-bodied with citrus notes. Great crowd pleasing white!

### 2008 Alamos Chardonnay

I've found this to be a very consistent, well-balanced Chardonnay. The 2008 has a crisp aroma with subtle oak notes. It's smooth on the palate with a nice, round mouthfeel and tropical fruit and hints of banana. The mid-palate shows light oak notes and pear flavors. The finish is medium-dry with light citrus notes. Good flavored and well-structured Chardonnay.

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### **NV 7 Daughters White**

This unique blend of seven white varietals is almost perfect this year. It begins with aromas of orange blossoms then follows with medium-ripe stone fruits and floral notes. This wine has very good balance between fruit, acidity, and mouthfeel making it a very enjoyable warm weather white. This is what Conundrum used to taste like. Enjoy!

### **2009 Molina Sauvignon Blanc**

Even though this SB is from Chile, it tastes more like a New Zealand SB. It has an expressive herbaceous aroma with bright flavors. It's crisp and clean on the palate with grapefruit and citrus flavors and mineral and herbaceous notes. The finish is bright with passion fruit flavors. If you want New Zealand flavor with Chilean pricing, then this is your choice.

### **2009 Chilensis Sauvignon Blanc**

This SB has a terrific aroma – expressive citrus and fresh grass. It's quite bright on the palate with lime and citrus flavors that soften to rounder textured tropical fruit flavors on the mid-palate. This white is clean, refreshing, and very flavorful. The finish is lengthy with crisp passion fruit flavors. Perfect warm weather white.

### **2008 Chilensis Chardonnay**

I really like this winery – not a clunker in the bunch. This Chardonnay has a very Burgundian aroma with crisp apple flavors. It's a bit more New World on the palate with tangerine and tropical fruit flavors. This white has plenty of balancing acidity and no oak, which helps accentuate the clean and fresh flavors. The finish is dry with Granny Smith flavors. Terrific example of a **well-balanced** un-oaked Chardonnay.

### **2009 Chateau Roustan White**

I **LOVE** Rhone-styled whites at “try me” prices. This example is mostly Roussanne (60%) and Viognier (20%) and bursts with flavor. Aromas of lime rise from the glass and lead to clean and fresh fruit flavors – ripe pears then creamy apples. The fruit is perfectly ripe and balanced with just enough acidity. The finish is crisp with tropical, mango & tangerine, flavors and good length.

## **REDS**

### **2007 Latour Meursault**

This is a fantastic Burgundy. It has crisp apple aromas that lead to wonderfully clean and fresh lemon notes on the palate. It has a lovely flavor – fresh and full-flavored, yet not overdone. The finish is quite nice with bright and juicy citrus notes. Burgundy can produce some of the most elegant Chards on the planet, subtle yet flavorful, and this is a perfect example.

### **Roquevale Alecrim Tinto**

Typical of most reds from Portugal, this is a blend of four to five varietals. This wine reminds me of an easy drinking Rhone. Aromas of fresh berries with hints of herbs lead to slightly bright, just-picked raspberry fruit on the palate. Strawberry flavors emerge on the mid-palate which also shows good concentration. This red has excellent structure and the acidity is perfect. The finish is filled with more raspberry fruit, pleasant dryness, and nice length. Great summer red.

### **2005 Roquevale Reserva**

This is a tremendous wine from Portugal made from mostly Aragonez, Portugal's version of Tempranillo. Big aromas of spicy, concentrated, black fruits fill the glass. It has a rich and lush mouthfeel with concentrated, black and brambly fruit, herbs, spice, and even vanilla flavors. There are a multitude of flavors swirling around in this one. The finish is big as well with dark berry and caramel notes. This is a **TREMENDOUS** value!

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### 2007 Latour Montagny 1<sup>er</sup> Cru

I've always loved this wine as a value Burgundy – glorious, unoaked fruit without the price. It has a lovely aroma of pear fruit with a smooth mouthfeel and pleasantly ripe apple and lemon flavors. The finish is crisp with hints of almond. Latour's Montagny = perfectly ripe fruit with just the right amount of juicy acidity = a very enjoyable gastronomic experience for you!

### 2007 Liberty School Cuvee

Interesting blend – Syrah, Petite Sirah, Mourvedre, & Viognier – that's quite enjoyable. It's rich on the palate with lovely, liqueur-like berry fruit flavors. It's exquisitely balanced with perfectly ripe fruit and perfectly present acidity. The berry fruit is quite pretty and delicate in this feminine offering. The finish is good with more pure, berry fruit. Neat blend!

### 2007 4 Vines O.V. Zinfandel

I'm loving Zins right now. They've finally figured out the winning formula – start making structured wines with less ripeness and more acidity. This example is very well-balanced with jammy flavors and good levels of ripeness. The spice component is perfect – just enough to add to the complexity of the wine. There's good acidity as well and medium tannins on the berry filled finish. Well done.

### 2007 Fontenille Luberon

Most of the '07 Rhones are gone, so I'm trying Rhone-styled wines from the Luberon. Good move because these are fantastic wines. Liqueur-like berry aromas lead to smooth, beautifully ripe dark berry fruit on the palate. There's a hint of herbs as well as good acidity. The finish is dry with heavier tannins and violets and dark cherries. Well done.

### 2006 Chateau Haut-Monplaisir Cahors

Cahors, France's region for Malbec, produces an interesting take on the varietal. This example is unoaked with aromas of nice chocolate, berry fruit and hints of graphite. Bright, medium-ripe, dark, black fruit flavors emerge on the palate with *terroir* driven mineral notes. This wine has bug grip with big, but integrated tannins. The finish shows pleasantly ripe black fruit and good length. Good example of French Malbec.

### 2008 Valdivieso Merlot

This is a great example of Chilean Merlot – slightly rustic, but still maintaining a solid fruit component. Dark plum aromas with a hint of bell pepper lead to ripe, dark berry/black fruit flavors on the palate plus a little Chilean bell pepper, coffee, and minerals, too. This wine has bigger tannins and a good finish. And at this price, it represents an excellent value.

### 2009 Over the Edge Pinot Noir

I'm finding that New Zealand Pinots hit that sweet spot between ripe-California and structured-Burgundy. Good, not overripe, fruit with acidity and hints of earth – each in perfect balance. This example (2<sup>nd</sup> vintage as a Herb's Choice!) has a juicy, cranberry aroma with a weighty mouthfeel and medium-ripe, strawberry, cherry fruit with hints of spice. Acidity ties all the parts together while the finish is juicy with berry fruit and good length. A very well-made Pinot Noir!

### 2007 Napa Creek Napa Cabernet

Beware, the apocalypse is coming – someone's made a \$10 Napa Cabernet that doesn't stink! Truth be told this is a killer red. Chocolate, cherry aromas rise from the glass while medium bright, ripe, cherry/berry fruit flavors with hints of vanilla fill the palate. Even better – this wine has structure! There's plenty of acidity. The finish shows dried cherry fruit and nice length. **TREMENDOUS VALUE!**

### 2007 Duck Pond Cabernet

Good \$10 Cabernet from Washington State? You betcha, especially when it comes from the warmer, Wahluke Slope appellation. This red has a spicy, concentrated, berry aroma. It's amazingly smooth and elegant on the palate with subtle chocolate and cherry flavors that are perfectly ripe. The finish shows good juicy, black fruit, a hint of chocolate and nice length.

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### **2005 Chalone Estate Pinot Noir**

Vintage change? Hooray for our team! This Estate Pinot Noir is a fabulous deal. Aromas of dark, red fruits with a pleasant hint of spice waft from the glass. On the palate you'll find medium-bright, heavier red fruit, and just the right amount of spice and acid. This is a very enjoyable Pinot Noir with good levels of fruit and acid. Tremendous deal!

### **2006 Mont Gras Antu Syrah**

This high elevation Syrah sees 18 mo. in mostly 1 & 2 year old French oak. Although from Chile, it's very French in style. Earthy aromas of herbs and minerals lead to slightly bright dark, red berry fruit. This is a heavier, meatier Syrah with more rustic qualities while still maintaining plenty of fruit. The finish is bright and juicy with plenty of berry fruit. Nice wine.

### **2007 Arancio Nero D'Avola**

Nero D'Avola is the unofficial red of Sicily. This example has a heavier aroma of ripe berry fruit. On the palate, you'll find ripe flavors of stewed, dark berry fruits that have enough acidity and brightness. The fruit turns to softer, fresh-picked raspberry flavors on the mid-palate. The finish is quite lengthy with fuller-flavored raspberry fruit. Well done.

### **2008 St-Damien Rhone**

This Rhone has a nice aroma – bright and juicy berry fruit. It's ripe on the palate with a mélange of berry flavors and hints of herbs and tobacco. This fruit forward offering has enough complexity and acidity to avoid being labeled a fruit bomb. The finish has slightly darker berry flavors and more tobacco notes. It's very enjoyable on the palate and a good example of the region.

### **2007 Fritz Russian River Pinot Noir**

This is an exquisite Pinot Noir. Pretty raspberry aromas rise from the glass with pleasantly bright, fresh-picked raspberries on the palate. This is a delicate, feminine style of PN with a balancing dry backbone. The finish shows darker red berries with good length. Terrific example of the varietal.

### **2005 Fritz Dry Creek Cabernet**

What a killer wine (92% Cabernet 8% Malbec, 16 mo. in French oak). Liqueur-like black fruit aromas fill the glass. Rich, yet elegant, flavors of black cherries with hints of cedar envelope the palate. This Cabernet has excellent balance and structure. The finish has good grip and terrific length with gobs of chocolate-cherry fruit. Great Cabernet!

### **2009 M. Torino Pinot Noir**

This Pinot Noir has the elegance and balance of wines costing twice as much. It has a dried, red fruit aroma with an envious smoothness on the palate. There's ripe, red berry fruit with a balancing level of acidity. Torino achieves perfect fruit that's delicately ripe, but not overripe. The finish is heavier with darker red fruits, earth and light tannins. Exquisite Pinot Noir!

### **2008 La Linda Malbec**

This wine is always a value simply because it's declassified estate fruit from Luigi Bosca from Lujan de Cuyo. The 2008 has concentrated black fruit aromas that lead to easy-drinking berry fruit flavors, hints of spice, and good acidity on the palate. This wine has good structure and excellent balance between fruit and acidity. The finish shows good length and nice, dried berry fruit. Great example of the varietal!

### **2008 Poppy Pinot Noir**

Given the temperament of Pinot Noir and the demand for quality grapes, I don't know how Poppy does it. Each vintage is as good as or better than the last. The 2008 is a solid Pinot Noir – clean, easy-drinking with lovely red berry fruit and just enough acidity. As this wine opens the fruit will expand and become darker. The finish has ripe red fruits, light earth, and very good length. Well done!

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### **2005 St. Francis Red**

This red is a blend of Merlot, Syrah, Cabernet Franc, Cab, & Zin. Aromas of dark red fruit and light spice notes lead to medium-ripe berry/cherry fruit, cedar, and spice. This blend has a pleasant mid-palate. The finish has good grip with full-flavored cherry fruit. As this wine opens the fruit really fleshes out and becomes much richer. Very good everyday red.

### **2008 Tamari Reserve Malbec**

This is an excellent example of a higher quality Malbec. Dark berry fruit aromas coupled with a touch of cocoa lead to pretty boysenberry 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 huckleberry and cocoa flavors. Nice wine.

### **2006 Macina Morellino di Scansano**

Morellino di Scansano is the bridge between rustic, "Old World" and fruit forward, "New World" styles. This example has a juicy, dark berry aroma. It's quite smooth and elegant on the palate with a lovely fruit component – lots of berry and cherry fruit. It's clean on the palate (versus the more rustic Chianti) with good acidity and body. As this wine opens the flavors become richer and heavier with a pleasant hint of spice as well. The finish shows strawberry and red berry fruit and good length. Nice everyday red.

## **ADVENTUROUS**

### **The Wine Advocate - 93 Points**

#### **2007 Les Cailloux Chateaufeuf du Pape**

"The 2007 Les Cailloux (65% Grenache, 20% Mourvedre, & 12% Syrah) comes from 60-year-old vines and is aged completely in tank except for the Mourvedre and Syrah components, which are kept in small barrels. Explosively fruity, this dense plum/purple-colored wine displays grilled meat notes intermixed with Provençal herbs, spice box, black cherry and black currant, in addition to having a lush, opulent texture. The finish goes on and on, and the wine is beautifully pure. It can be drunk now or cellared for 12 or more years."

#### **Karma Sparkling Brut**

I couldn't resist this Chardonnay/Chenin one hitter sparkler. It's the perfect sizes for 2 – small or 1 – large glass of bubbly. It's crisp and clean with medium ripe apple flavors and most importantly, it's supremely enjoyable!

### **The Wine Advocate - 95+ Points**

#### **2006 Martini Lot 1 Cabernet**

"The 2006 Cabernet Lot 1 has an opaque purple color and an exquisite yet youthful nose of blue and black fruits, graphite, and loamy soil notes as well as cedar and wood smoke. Full-bodied and multi-layered, with exceptional purity, this blend of 96% Cabernet and 4% Petite Sirah is set for 25+ years of longevity."

#### **Alvear Amontillado**

It's not too often that I get to recommend a good Sherry. I'm constantly bombarded with normal wines that when a Sherry comes along, it's a nice treat. When it's a very good Sherry, it's even better. This example achieves that perfect balance between not too dry and not too sweet. It's clean and surprisingly easy drinking with dried, white fruit flavors, and roasted nuts on the finish. Put a slight chill on it and you have an exquisite back porch contemplator.

### **The Wine Advocate - 90 Points**

#### **2006 Martini Napa Cabernet**

"A strong line-up of Napa offerings includes a superb bargain, the 2006 Cabernet a blend of 88% Cabernet 10% Merlot, & the rest Syrah & Petit Verdot. Its deep ruby/plum color is accompanied by sweet blue & red fruits intertwined with hints of loamy soil, licorice, & subtle back-ground oak. With good flavor as well as silky tannins, this well-balanced, concentrated 2006 should be even better over the next 10-15 years. It is a big-time sleeper of the vintage."

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### Wine Enthusiast - 90 Points

#### 2004 Jacob Creek Reeves Point Chardonnay

"A relatively restrained, minerally version of Australian Chard, with a touch of graphite to the crisp pear aromas. Some gently toasted nut notes impart richness of texture and complexity on the palate. Long and slightly tannic on the finish, this could develop well over the next 2-3 years."

### 2009 Dom Houchart Rosé

I haven't carried a Rosé from Provence, the birthplace of Rosé, in awhile. I finally found one that meets my strict standards – good taste AND good price. This one has a fresh strawberry aroma which continues on the palate with lovely flavors. It's smooth and clean with balanced acid and perfect fruit – present, but not candied. Very refreshing and a good value to boot!

### The Wine Advocate - 90 Points

#### 2005 Spencer Roloson Syrah Madder Lake Vineyard

"The outstanding 2005 Syrah has a deep ruby/purple color and a beautiful nose of fresh picked blueberries intermixed with smoky cassis and damp earth. It is full-bodied, layered, substantial in flavor, but also elegant and pure. Drink it over the next 5-7 years."

### The Wine Advocate - 89 Points

#### 2008 Garrigue Cotes du Rhone Cuvee Romaine

This custom cuvee from Eric Solomon is actually declassified Vacqueyras, it's a blend of 65% Grenache, 25% Mourvedre, & 10% Syrah. Slightly more rustic, the 2008 exhibits sweet black fruits intermixed with notions of forest floor, earth, pepper, and garrigue. Gamy, rich, and chewy, with austere tannins, the overall impression is one of full-bodied power and plenty of flavor. Enjoy it over the next 3-5 years."

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