

Wine Spectator Insider

Marvin R. Shanken *Editor and Publisher*

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CHARDONNAY AND PINOT NOIR FROM CALIFORNIA, NORTHERN RHÔNE REDS AND ARGENTINEAN MALBECS shine in this week's *Wine Spectator Insider*. Sojourn places five Sonoma Pinot Noirs, most of them single-vineyard cuvées, among this week's picks, but the Chardonnays of Helen Turley's Marcassin label, reviewed by James Laube, come away peerless.

Other standouts this week include Mendoza Malbecs from the likes of Bodega Norton, tasted by James Molesworth, who also reviewed 10 Syrah-based Northern Rhône reds, including some from familiar names like Perrin, Duclaux, Chave, Ferraton and Tardieu-Laurent.

It is, however, a buffet of outstanding and classic expressions in California Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Pinot Noir and Chardonnay, from benchmark producers like Paul Hobbs and Marcassin, that take top honors among the Hot Wines, on page 4.



The vineyards of Altocedro in Mendoza's Uco Valley

ARGENTINA

BODEGA NORTON

Privada Mendoza 2008

92 points | \$25 | 6,000 cases imported | Red

Rich and dense, offering beautifully detailed mocha, boysenberry, fig and black currant notes, all framed by alluring spice, anise and graphite, with a long, rich finish. A large-scaled style. Very impressive. Malbec, Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon. Drink now through 2013.—*J.M.*

CRUZ

Malbec Mendoza Andina 2008

91 points | \$20 | 1,600 cases imported | Red

Rich, with lots of ripe, spicy blackberry, currant and boysenberry fruit layered with enticing black licorice and vibrant spice notes, followed by a winey finish. Drink now through 2012.—*J.M.*

ALTOCEDRO

Malbec Mendoza La Consulta Select 2009

90 points | \$19 | 900 cases imported | Red

Flashy toast gives this a mocha and anise jump start, backed by a core of crushed plum, blackberry and fig paste. A cocoa edge hangs on through the finish, with latent drive stretching it all out. Drink now through 2012.—*J.M.*

KSANA

Malbec Mendoza 2008

90 points | \$18 | 2,000 cases imported | Red

Very fleshy, with plum, fig and boysenberry paste flavors liberally layered with dark toast and espresso notes, followed by a broad finish. For the hedonist crowd. Drink now through 2012.—*J.M.*

BODEGA NORTON

Malbec Mendoza Reserva 2008

90 points | \$20 | 61,000 cases imported | Red

Plush, with velvety blackberry, fig paste and warm currant confiture notes backed by mouthwatering ganache and espresso. A big wine, but driven and lively. Drink now through 2012.—*J.M.*

TRIVENTO

Amado Sur Mendoza 2009

90 points | \$15 | 1,000 cases imported | Red

Dark, with a core of very ripe black currant, raspberry ganache and black licorice notes, supported by polished tannins. A raspberry note emerges more on the lengthy finish. Very solid. Terrific value. Malbec, Bonarda and Syrah. Drink now through 2012.—*J.M.*

CALIFORNIA



Sonoma's Marcassin Vineyard

MARTINELLI

Chardonnay Russian River Valley Zio Tony Ranch 2008

94 points | \$50 | 545 cases made | White

Bold, ripe and fleshy, with exotic floral and spicy notes, along with flavors of bubble gum, fig, honeydew melon and hazelnut. Full-bodied and viscous, gaining depth and nuance on the long, tapered finish. Drink now through 2017.—*J.L.*

SOJOURN

Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast Sangiacomo Vineyard 2009

94 points | \$48 | 875 cases made | Red

Impressive and notable for its polish and finesse, this smooth-textured red shows subtle cherry, berry, mineral and spice flavors that build depth and intensity, all the while maintaining an understated elegance. Drink now through 2020.—*J.L.*

LEVIATHAN

California 2008

93 points | \$48 | 2,300 cases made | Red

Starts understated, building depth and dimension, featuring bright, rich black currant, anise, sage and black licorice character. A full-bodied orchestration of flavors at the end weave together into a tapered finish. Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Syrah and Cabernet Franc. Drink now through 2022.—*J.L.*

MARCASSIN

Chardonnay Sonoma Coast Three Sisters Vineyard 2006

93 points | \$75 | 650 cases made | White

A rich, full-bodied style, showing melon, spice and green apple flavors, with a slice of citrus. Clean and alluring, building depth on the finish, where the smoke and roasted fig flavors become more prominent. Drink now through 2017.—*J.L.*

SOJOURN

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Wohler Vineyard 2009

92 points | \$48 | 215 cases made | Red

Shows wonderful focus, vibrancy and balance, with a mix of spicy berry, mineral, anise and blackberry flavors. Pure, intense and snappy, ending with a taut, tannic finish. Best from 2012 through 2020.—*J.L.*

SOJOURN

Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast Rodgers Creek Vineyard 2009

91 points | \$48 | 575 cases made | Red

An enticing floral mix of herb, spice, black cherry and wilted rose, this builds intensity and depth, with detailed blackberry, mineral and cedar notes that firm up on the finish. Drink now through 2018.—*J.L.*

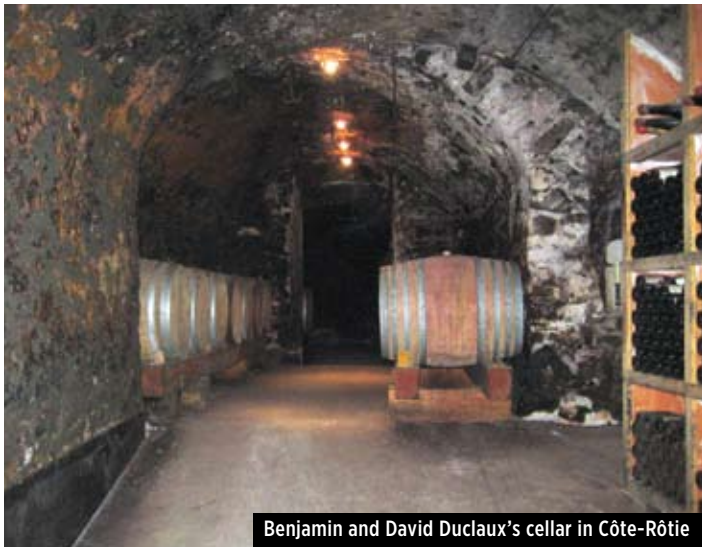
SOJOURN

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley 2009

90 points | \$42 | 325 cases made | Red

Complex, with dried berry, cherry, mineral and sage flavors that are dense, detailed, full-bodied and layered, ending with a pleasing mineral aftertaste. Drink now through 2016.—*J.L.*

FRANCE



Benjamin and David Duclaux's cellar in Côte-Rôtie

Rhône

EMMANUEL DARNAUD

Crozes-Hermitage Les Trois Chênes 2009

92 points | \$35 | 500 cases imported | Red

A modern style, with dark, alluring espresso and bittersweet cocoa notes leading the way, followed by muscular black currant paste, crushed fig and plum sauce notes. The long, broad, dark finish has lots of latent drive. There's plenty of stuffing here, and this should open with a touch of cellaring. Best yet from this emerging producer. Drink now through 2015.—*J.M.*

EMMANUEL DARNAUD

Crozes-Hermitage Mise en Bouche 2009

91 points | \$28 | 150 cases imported | Red

Dark and winey, with very lively acidity supporting the layered blackberry, black licorice and loganberry fruit. A tangy streak of white pepper cuts through on the finish. Delicious. Drink now through 2014.—*J.M.*

DELAS

Crozes-Hermitage Les Launes 2009

91 points | \$21 | 500 cases imported | Red

Stylish, with lots of mocha, spice and black tea aromas backed by velvety-textured blackberry and raspberry fruit. The long, suave finish stretches out nicely, with the fruit and spice hanging on. Drink now through 2014.—*J.M.*

MAISON NICOLAS PERRIN

Crozes-Hermitage 2009

91 points | \$33 | 1,000 cases made | Red

Vivid, with superracy blackberry, black cherry and fig fruit liberally laced with graphite and black tea. A latent iron note leaves a tangy, mouthwatering finish and adds length. Drink now through 2014.—*J.M.*

TARDIEU-LAURENT

Côte-Rôtie 2008

91 points | \$92 | 150 cases made | Red

Very stylish, with a mix of blueberry, blackberry and red currant fruit laced with black tea and a tangy iron note. Lifting spice hints chime in on the finish. Drink now through 2015.—*J.M.*

GEORGES VERNAY

Côte-Rôtie Maison Rouge 2007

91 points | \$125 | 290 cases made | Red

Alluring, with perfumy black tea, sweet tapenade and maduro tobacco notes leading the way for a core of mulled plum and blackberry fruit. A smoky mesquite note weaves through the finish. Drink now through 2015.—*J.M.*

JEAN-LOUIS CHAVE

St.-Joseph 2008

90 points | \$60 | 200 cases imported | Red

Nicely plush for the vintage, with tangy iron and white pepper notes melded into the damson plum and black cherry fruit. There's a lingering perfume on the finish. Drink now through 2013.—*J.M.*

BENJAMIN & DAVID DUCLAUX

Côte-Rôtie La Germiné 2008

90 points | \$75 | 400 cases imported | Red

Very polished, offering a long, pure, silky palate of red and black currant, iron and black tea flavors that stay focused through the lengthy finish, with nicely integrated acidity. Drink now through 2014.—*J.M.*

FERRATON PÈRE & FILS

Crozes-Hermitage La Matinière 2009

90 points | \$24 | 1,000 cases imported | Red

Very solid, with a deliciously winey core of mulled black cherry, currant, pepper, maduro tobacco and iron all rolled together and then running through the juicy finish. Drink now through 2013.—*J.M.*

ALAIN VOGÉ

Cornas Les Chailles 2008

90 points | \$48 | NA cases made | Red

Bright and very lively, with lots of red currant, blackberry and mesquite notes pushed by roasted vanilla, tobacco and olive. Shows good intensity on the finish, while staying focused and pure. Very solid for the vintage. Drink now through 2014.—*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.

MARCASSIN

Chardonnay Sonoma Coast Marcassin Vineyard 2006
96 points | \$125 | 725 cases made | White

At once bold, rich and layered, with a measure of delicacy and finesse, unfolding to tiers of fig, melon, bubble gum, spice and honeysuckle. Finishes with a dash of cedary oak. Drink now through 2017. *From California.*—J.L.

PAUL HOBBS

Cabernet Sauvignon St. Helena Beckstoffer Dr. Crane Vineyard 2008
95 points | \$150 | 466 cases made | Red

Bold, rich, intense and generous, with a perfumed, aromatic mix of ripe blackberry, currant, anise, sage and licorice. Full-bodied, gaining depth and richness on the finish, where this gains an even tighter focus. Drink now through 2020. *From California.*—J.L.

DELECTUS

Cabernet Franc Knights Valley 2008
94 points | \$75 | 575 cases made | Red

A profound, strikingly rich, juicy and layered wine, spilling over with blackberry, black licorice, plum sauce and roasted coffee notes. Full-bodied, with nutmeg and sage elements, ending with a long, persistent finish. Best from 2012 through 2020. *From California.*—J.L.

SOJOURN

Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast Ridgetop Vineyard 2009
94 points | \$59 | 250 cases made | Red

Very ripe and juicy, with lively, vivid plum, black cherry and wild berry fruit that's full-bodied, picking up red and black licorice and richer berry pie flavors that build depth and intensity. Drink now 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 12 people in two offices. They work together to review more than 18,000 wines each year, more than any other publication. Together, our six senior tasters count more than 140 years of tasting experience.

We always taste wine blind in our offices in Napa and New York. 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.

James Laube Senior editor, Napa
Joined *Wine Spectator* in 1983. Tasting beat: California

Kim Marcus Managing editor, New York
Joined *Wine Spectator* in 1988. Tasting beat: Austria, Greece, Port, Portugal, Southern France

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

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, Bordeaux, Chile, Finger Lakes, Loire Valley, Rhône Valley, South Africa

Bruce Sanderson Tasting director, New York
Joined *Wine Spectator* in 1993. Tasting beat: Burgundy, Champagne, Germany, Italy

Harvey Steiman Editor at large, San Francisco
Joined *Wine Spectator* in 1983. Tasting beat: Australia, Oregon, Washington

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