

Wine Spectator Insider

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A Members-Only, Weekly Publication

THIS week's edition of the *Wine Spectator Insider* features nearly 40 excellent red wines from California. Most of this report's wines are Pinot Noirs, but there are also outstanding Cabernets, Zinfandels and Rhône-style wines from the Golden State. Five classic wines top this issue's selections, with two 97-point wines reviewed by James Laube leading the way. You'll find both of them among the Hot Wines, on page 4. Laube's notes on two 2006s from Sine Qua Non, Manfred Krankl's highly sought-after cult label, are here, as is a classic-rated 2006 Russian River Pinot Noir reviewed by Napa tasting coordinator MaryAnn Worobiec.

Tim Fish's notes on two 2007 Zinfandels from Turley, one of California's premier producers of the high-octane varietal, round out this week's edition.

California

JC CELLARS

Petite Syrah Mendocino County Eaglepoint Ranch 2006
94 points | \$45 | 197 cases made | Red

A real mouthful of Petite—rich and thick, with boysenberry, pepper, huckleberry, blackberry and cassis flavors that are incredibly muscular and full-bodied. More classy than rustic, with a long finish. Drink now through 2015.—*M.W.*

MERRYVALE

Pinot Noir Carneros Stanly Ranch Estate 2007
94 points | \$45 | 185 cases made | Red

Perfumed floral, plum jam and black cherry and berry fruit is supple, elegant, focused and balanced. Long and rich, gaining depth, nuance and complexity. Drink now through 2013.—*J.L.*

RED CAR

Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast 2007
94 points | \$45 | 733 cases made | Red

Focused on a core of black cherry and blackberry fruit that's medium- to full-bodied, complex and spicy. Smooth-textured, with a long finish. Drink now through 2014.—*J.L.*

ACACIA

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Horseshoe Bend Vineyard 2007
93 points | \$65 | 345 cases made | Red

Bright, rich and fleshy, with a supple mix of wild berry, raspberry and floral scents. Tight but not tannic, focused and concentrated, picking up a pleasant earthy, chicory edge. Drink now through 2013.—*J.L.*

DONUM

Pinot Noir Carneros 2006
93 points | \$65 | 888 cases made | Red

Compact, but wonderfully ripe, juicy and pure, with an explosion of pomegranate, cherry, currant and raspberry flavors, which are accented with sage, cedar, spice and tea. Drink now through 2014.—*M.W.*

LAIRD FAMILY

Pinot Noir Carneros Ghost Ranch 2007
93 points | \$38 | 343 cases made | Red

Pure, rich, intense and focused, delivering a beam of ripe cherry, blackberry and wild berry fruit that's deep, delicious, well-structured and long on the finish. Drink now through 2014.—*J.L.*

MACPHAIL

Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast Goodin Vineyard 2007
93 points | \$65 | 280 cases made | Red

Spicy, with a dusty berry and fresh earth edge to the dried cherry and wild berry fruit. Full-bodied, complex, tight and young, but aimed in the right direction. Drink now through 2014.—*J.L.*

PATZ & HALL

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Chenoweth Ranch 2006
93 points | \$55 | 1,383 cases made | Red

An exceptional 2006 that offers wonderful harmony and finesse. Full-bodied, ripe and fleshy plum, black cherry and raspberry fruit is intense yet elegant. Smooth, deep and persistent. Drink now through 2014.—*J.L.*

SAINTSBURY

Pinot Noir Carneros Lee Vineyard 2007
93 points | \$45 | 1,463 cases made | Red

Shows wonderful richness, density, depth and concentration, with pure, ripe, sharply focused wild berry, blackberry and black cherry fruit that has great structure. Best from 2010 through 2016.—*J.L.*

TURLEY

Zinfandel Contra Costa County Duarte 2007
93 points | \$32 | NA cases made | Red

Sleek and elegantly ripe, yet there's some muscle underneath. Aromas of cherry and smoky sage lead to complex, supple huckleberry, licorice and cracked pepper flavors finish with zesty tannins. Drink now through 2015.—*T.F.*

ALESIA

Pinot Noir Green Valley of Russian River Valley 2007
92 points | \$44 | 200 cases made | Red

Aromas of ripe cherry, raspberry and strawberry firm up on the palate, joined by a pleasant earthy mineral edge. Deep, concentrated, structured and full-bodied. A good bet for the cellar. Best from 2010 through 2016.—*J.L.*

ROBERT BIALE

Petite Sirah Napa Valley E.B.A. 2005
92 points | \$75 | 200 cases made | Red

Dark and concentrated, with fragrant violet, black tea, coconut, huckleberry, blackberry and espresso notes that are complex and detailed. Full-bodied, with chunky, chewy tannins. Drink now through 2014.—*M.W.*

DREW FAMILY

Pinot Noir Yorkville Highlands Weir Vineyard 2007
92 points | \$42 | 206 cases made | Red

Pure, vivid wild berry and blackberry fruit is both supple and tightly focused. Medium-bodied, long and persistent on the finish, where this picks up a pleasant spicy, earthy edge. Drink now through 2013.—*J.L.*

HOWELL MOUNTAIN

Cabernet Sauvignon Howell Mountain 2005
92 points | \$60 | 670 cases made | Red

Firm, rich and intense, with a tight, concentrated core of dried currant, black cherry, wild berry, mineral and spice. Full-bodied, with a touch of pepper and herb, ending with a long, full finish. Best from 2011 through 2016.—*J.L.*

SAINTSBURY

Pinot Noir Carneros Stanly Ranch 2007
92 points | \$45 | 3,259 cases made | Red

Supple, elegant and stylish, showing rich blackberry and blueberry fruit, with pretty loamy, earthy shadings. Gains traction and depth, ending with firm tannins and a pleasing mineral edge. Drink now through 2013.—*J.L.*

SEQUANA

Pinot Noir Santa Lucia Highlands Sarmiento Vineyard 2007
92 points | \$32 | 2,924 cases made | Red

Deliciously complex, with a rich range of flavors built around loamy currant, blackberry, plum and sassafras. Gets more interesting with every sip. Best from 2010 through 2015.—*J.L.*

TRIUMVIR

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Amber Ridge Vineyard 2007
92 points | \$44 | 100 cases made | Red

Spice, cola and sassafras are tight, with a pleasant earth, sage and dusty berry edge that builds depth and complexity, with touches of spice and loamy earth. Drink now through 2014.—*J.L.*

TURLEY

Zinfandel Howell Mountain Rattlesnake Ridge 2007
92 points | \$40 | NA cases made | Red

Dense, rustic and full of personality. Offers aromas of wild berry and loamy white pepper, with layered blackberry and briary sage flavors that linger toward ripe, zesty tannins. Drink now through 2013.—*T.F.*

VISION CELLARS

Pinot Noir Santa Lucia Highlands Rosella's Vineyard 2007
92 points | \$50 | 300 cases made | Red

Strikes a nice balance between rich, loamy earth, dried currant and berry fruit and tightly wound tannins, but holds its focus, gaining depth and concentration. Needs time. Best from 2010 through 2015.—*J.L.*

JAFFURS

Petite Sirah Santa Barbara County Thompson Vineyard 2007
91 points | \$34 | 499 cases made | Red

A ripe core of blackberry and huckleberry notes have great concentration, with vivid white pepper highlights and powerful tannins. The flavors persist on the long finish. Drink now through 2015.—*M.W.*

SOJOURN

Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast Windsor Oaks Vineyard 2007
91 points | \$48 | 125 cases made | Red

Rich and fleshy, with a range of wild berry, blackberry and blueberry fruit that's tight and focused, picking up a nice minty herb edge and holding its focus. Ends tight. This can age. Drink now through 2013.—*J.L.*

SPENCE

Cabernet Sauvignon Howell Mountain Reserve 2005
91 points | \$65 | 100 cases made | Red

Tight and intense, with a complex core of dried currant, blackberry and savory herb and spice. Full-bodied, this firms up on the palate, where the flavors are deep and concentrated. Best from 2010 through 2014.—*J.L.*

WHETSTONE

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Pleasant Hill Vineyard 2007
91 points | \$45 | 500 cases made | Red

Tight and firm, with spicy cola, fresh earth, mineral and dried berry fruit that's compact and concentrated, fanning out nicely on the finish. Drink now through 2014.—*J.L.*

BAKER LANE

Syrah Sonoma Coast Estate Vineyard 2007
90 points | \$45 | 465 cases made | Red

Subtle ripe blackberry, plum and savory mineral notes are medium- to full-bodied, ending with a complex finish of cracked pepper and chicory. Drink now through 2014.—*J.L.*

BLACKBIRD

Paramour Napa Valley 2006
90 points | \$90 | 287 cases made | Red

Dense and complex, with a touch of velvet to smooth it out. Aromas of black currant and espresso lead to layered cherry, blueberry and cedar flavors that finish with ripe, loamy tannins. Needs time. Merlot, Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon. Best from 2011 through 2015.—*T.F.*

GOLDENEYE

Pinot Noir Anderson Valley 2006
90 points | \$55 | 12,447 cases made | Red

Firm and rich, this is marked by tight mineral, dried currant and berry fruit that gains velocity and depth, with touches of cedar and anise and tannins that give the flavors traction. Needs time. Best from 2014 through 2017.—*J.L.*

GREY STACK

Pinot Noir Bennett Valley The Fisherman Connell Family Vineyard 2007
90 points | \$32 | 50 cases made | Red

Firm, spicy, tight and compact, with chewy dried currant, wild berry and blackberry fruit that's tannic and peppery, with a dash of anise and chewy tannins. Drink now through 2015.—*J.L.*

KENWOOD

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Reserve 2007
90 points | \$30 | 1,050 cases made | Red

Spicy black cherry and wild berry fruit is sleek, focused and full-bodied, with hints of mineral and sage showing on the finish, where this gains depth. Drink now through 2012.—*J.L.*

NICHOLSON RANCH

Pinot Noir Sonoma Valley 2007
90 points | \$38 | 1,808 cases made | Red

Spicy cola, raspberry and dried currant fruit is tight, full-bodied and structured, ending with chewy tannins and a pleasant earthy edge. Best from 2010 through 2015.—*J.L.*

RED CAR

Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast The Aphorist Bartolomei Vineyard 2007
90 points | \$60 | 300 cases made | Red

Loamy earth, blackberry and wild berry fruit is delicate and caressing, smooth and polished. Full-bodied, this ends with a spicy cola and sassafras edge. Drink now through 2014.—*J.L.*

STEELE

Pinot Noir Sonoma Valley Parmelee-Hill Vineyard 2005
90 points | \$28 | 500 cases made | Red

Clean and spicy, pure and elegant, with a delicate mix of spicy wild berry, fresh earth and cedar, ending with a minty herbal cola edge that's pleasing. Drink now through 2012.—*J.L.*

THREE STICKS

Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast Durell Vineyard 2005
90 points | \$55 | 192 cases made | Red

Pretty and delicate, with currant, herb, berry, cherry and cinnamon notes that are smooth and focused, finishing with a spicy tobacco note. Drink now through 2012.—*M.W.*

TURLEY

Zinfandel Paso Robles Dusi Vineyard 2007
90 points | \$42 | NA cases made | Red

Powerful and a bit rustic, this is loaded with personality, offering aromas of smoky cherry and licorice, with complex briary huckleberry and cracked pepper flavors. Drink now through 2014.—*T.F.*

VISION CELLARS

Pinot Noir Santa Lucia Highlands Garys' Vineyard 2007
90 points | \$48 | 252 cases made | Red

Loamy cola, sassafras and dried currant form the core flavors in this tight, earthy, peppery youngster, yet the flavors build and gain depth and richness along with a firm tannic backbone. Best from 2010 through 2015.—*J.L.*

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.

RED CAR

Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast Heaven & Earth La Bohème Vineyard 2007

97 points | \$60 | 292 cases made | Red

Delivers a tight, focused beam of rich, pure, concentrated blackberry and wild berry fruit that's full-bodied, complex and expansive on the finish, where this keeps unlocking doors of subtle flavors. Drink now through 2014. *From California.—J.L.*

SINE QUA NON

Grenache California Raven 2006

97 points | \$135 | 890 cases made | Red

Deliciously complex, bold, rich and layered, with dark berry, plum, mocha and spice. Full-bodied and mouth-coating, this is dense without being heavy. Ends with a long, persistent finish. Drink now through 2015. *From California.—J.L.*

DONUM

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley 2006

95 points | \$65 | 400 cases made | Red

Shows fantastic depth and focus, with aromatic trufflelike earth notes that highlight the pure raspberry, floral, cherry, herb and spice notes. This has a supple texture, juicy acidity and an intense finish that sails on and on. Drink now through 2015. *From California.—M.W.*

SINE QUA NON

Syrah California Raven 2006

95 points | \$135 | 1,441 cases made | Red

A delightful mix of big aromas and a gentler texture, this shows rich, bold blackberry jam, pepper, mineral and sage notes that are elegant and supple on the palate, ending with a chicory edge. Drink now through 2014. *From California.—J.L.*

SOJOURN

Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast Gap's Crown Vineyard 2007

95 points | \$48 | 475 cases made | Red

Beautifully crafted, ripe and juicy, with richly flavored blackberry and wild berry, sweet cherry, floral, anise and subtle herbal sage touches that are full-bodied, complex and long on the finish. Drink now through 2015. *From California.—J.L.*

WINE SPECTATOR'S TASTERS

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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 1983. Tasting beat: California

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Joined *Wine Spectator* in 1988. Tasting beat:

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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