

Wine Spectator Insider

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Marvin R. Shanken, *Editor and Publisher*

FIRST LOOK AT OUR EDITORS' MOST EXCITING NEW WINES

The *Wine Spectator Insider* features 33 impressive wines this week. From California, James Laube reviews five Chardonnays and a handful of Merlots, but most exceptional are the two classic-rated Pinot Noirs from Chasseur, among the Hot Wines, on page 4. Chasseur was a recent subject of Laube's blog (Aug. 28), in which he compared some of the Sonoma winery's 2004 Chardonnays and Pinot Noirs, many of which are officially reviewed here. It's also an excellent resource for those who would like to learn more about the Burgundy-influenced winemaking techniques employed by Chasseur winemaker Bill Hunter.

Continuing the Chardonnay and Pinot Noir theme, Bruce Sanderson reviews seven wines from Champagne, a region most famous for blending the two grapes. Traditional brut Champagnes are a blend of Burgundy's two noble grapes, along with some Pinot Meunier, and Sanderson covers nearly the full gamut of available styles, from traditional bruts to a brut rosé to a 97-point, 100 percent Chardonnay—a 1995 blanc de blancs from Krug, also among this issue's Hot Wines.

Finally, Harvey Steiman reviews some outstanding reds from Australia, as well as a Riesling and a Viognier. Included among the reds are the first releases from Sparky and Sarah Marquis since their departure from Marquis Philips. Called Mollydooker, an Australian term for a left-handed person, the winery's first releases are dark and dense, and impressive values at just \$20 each.

Australia

Black Puma

Shiraz Pyrenees 2004

92 points | \$70 | 150 cases imported | Red

A bit leaner than most Aussie Shiraz, but it has impressively focused blackberry, cherry and exotic spice aromas and flavors that last on the firm, taut, meaty finish. This should become more distinctive as it ages. Best from 2009 through 2020.—*H.S.*

Two Hands

Aphrodite Barossa Valley 2004

91 points | \$152 | 96 cases imported | Red

Big and ripe, a mouthfilling Cabernet that offers a blast of raspberry and black cherry fruit, shaded with savory, meaty overtones that are reminiscent of roast game, a smoky note adding interest to the firm finish. Best from 2011 through 2019.—*H.S.*

Penfolds

Riesling Eden Valley Reserve Bin 2005

91 points | \$18 | 431 cases imported | White

This one has real pizzazz, a lively mouthful of lime-scented pineapple and stony, mineral flavors, lingering juicily as the finish persists.—*H.S.*

Mollydooker

Shiraz McLaren Vale-Langhorne Creek-Padthaway The Boxer 2005

91 points | \$20 | 12,619 cases imported | Red

Dark and dense, a big wine yet lively with nutmeg- and cinnamon-scented blackberry, cherry and licorice aromas and flavors, balanced against firm but well-integrated tannins. This can use some time to soften, but it's a grabber already. Best from 2007 through 2014.—*H.S.*

Mollydooker

Cabernet Sauvignon Langhorne Creek-Padthaway The Maître D' 2005

90 points | \$20 | 1,310 cases imported | Red

Distinctively ripe and spicy, not at all herbal, and remarkably open-textured, a bundle of juicy plum, currant and blackberry fruit shaded with hints of clove and allspice. The finish remains focused against fine-grained tannins. Best from 2007 through 2013.—*H.S.*

Mollydooker

Two Left Feet McLaren Vale-Langhorne Creek-Padthaway 2005

90 points | \$20 | 6,576 cases imported | Red

Dark, dense and chewy, not a heavy wine, but the meaty, smoky black cherry and plum flavors persist impressively on the solid finish. Needs time to soften. Best after 2007.—*H.S.*

d'Arenberg

Viognier McLaren Vale-Adelaide Hills The Last Ditch 2005

90 points | \$22 | 250 cases imported | White

Bright and lively, a Viognier with snap behind the effusive tropical fruit and citrus flavors, its open texture letting the flavors sail on beautifully.—*H.S.*

California

Chasseur

Chardonnay Russian River Valley Lorenzo 2004

93 points | \$52 | 201 cases made | White

Creamy and delicate, rich and seductive, with creamy vanilla, pear, fig, spice and hazelnut. Very stylish, with an elegant mouthfeel that invites you back for a second and third glass.—*J.L.*

Chasseur

Chardonnay Sonoma Coast Durell 2004

93 points | \$48 | 296 cases made | White

A distinctive style that's intense and concentrated, with ripe pear, caramel apple and butterscotch notes that are rich and full-bodied, deep and expansive, with a long, rich aftertaste.—*J.L.*

Chasseur

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Freestone Station 2004

93 points | \$55 | 124 cases made | Red

A delicate, restrained style, yet brimming with intense fruit, offering supple and elegant wild berry and raspberry fruit, revealing hints of mineral, mushroom and light cedary oak. Lively acidity on the finish keeps it refreshing. Drink now through 2009.—*J.L.*

Martinelli

Chardonnay Russian River Valley Martinelli Road 2004

93 points | \$40 | 458 cases made | White

Seamless texture, smooth, rich, creamy and powerful, with layers of ripe fig, vanilla, hazelnut and hints of lemon curd, finishing with burst of ripe pear, apple and ginger.—*J.L.*

Paloma

Merlot Spring Mountain District 2004

93 points | \$54 | 1,135 cases made | Red

Complex aromatics of red currant, plum and black cherry carry over to the palate in a supple, graceful style, offering depth, richness and layers of flavor that keep unfolding. Tightly wound now, with firm but ripe tannins, this keeps revealing subtle flavor nuances, with hints of mineral, sage and dusty berry. Best from 2008 through 2013.—*J.L.*

Chasseur

Chardonnay Sonoma Coast Twin Hills 2004

92 points | \$40 | 149 cases made | White

Ultrarich and concentrated, with a firm, tight band of spicy apple, pear and hazelnut. Lively acidity keeps the flavors fresh and lively, with a long, lingering finish that taps a hint of butterscotch.—*J.L.*

Peter Michael

Pinot Noir Santa Lucia Highlands Pisoni Vineyard Le Moulin Rouge 2004

92 points | \$85 | 550 cases made | Red

Bold, rich and concentrated, bordering on syrupy, with dense boysenberry, blueberry and huckleberry fruit that's intense, succulent and showing a hint of heat on the finish. Excellent balance for a wine this size. Drink now through 2010.—*J.L.*

Shafer

Merlot Napa Valley 2004

92 points | \$45 | 10,000 cases made | Red

Ripe, juicy plum, blackberry and wild berry fruit is lively and plush, highly distinctive and well-proportioned, finishing with a burst of fruit and pretty toasty oak shadings. Drink now through 2009.—*J.L.*

Carter

Merlot Napa Valley Truchard Vineyards 2003

91 points | \$65 | 75 cases made | Red

Big, ripe and expressive, with aromas of vanilla bean, black currant, mocha and cedar which combine to give this a complex range of flavors. Tight and focused, it's rich and concentrated, building depth and concentration on the finish, where it's both supple and firmly tannic. Drink now through 2011.—*J.L.*

Destino

Chardonnay Russian River Valley 2004
90 points | \$38 | 598 cases made | White

Floral and bubblegum aromas are trim on the palate, though it's rich and complex, gaining depth and nuance on the finish, with a hint of cedar.—*J.L.*

France / Champagne

Henri Abelé

Brut Champagne Réserve 1996
94 points | \$55 | 50 cases imported | Sparkling

Dry and savory, this Champagne features biscuit, grapefruit, tobacco and dried peach notes. It's vivid, with a grainy texture and a long, supple finish. As much about texture as flavor. Drink now through 2020.—*B.S.*

Bollinger

Extra Brut Champagne R.D. 1996
94 points | \$200 | 750 cases imported | Sparkling

A powerhouse. Big and sophisticated, this Champagne combines lemon and grapefruit notes with candied fruits, roasted nuts and coffee. It's fresh, dry and finely detailed, with finesse and a lingering finish driven by acidity. Drink now through 2020.—*B.S.*

Drappier

Brut Blanc de Blancs Champagne 1995
94 points | \$70 | 500 cases made | Sparkling

This is full-bodied and nutty, with whole grain, malt, coffee and dried berry aromas and flavors. An expressive Champagne, this is aristocratic and beautifully balanced too. Great texture and length. Drink now through 2025.—*B.S.*

Krug

Brut Rosé Champagne NV
94 points | \$230 | NA cases made | Sparkling

Very dry, this rosé offers the essence of whole-grain bread, dried flowers, berries and spices. It's elegant, intense and supported by a lively acidity. Fine length and harmony. Overall, complex and inviting. Drink now through 2012.—*B.S.*

Duval-Leroy

Brut Champagne 1996
93 points | \$48 | 1,000 cases imported | Sparkling

A tangy citrus- and nut-flavored Champagne with a distinctive gum-tingling sensation. It starts out rich, turning lean and tightly wound on the finish. Fine coffee-tinged aftertaste. Drink now through 2020.—*B.S.*

Washington

Seven Hills

Cabernet Sauvignon Walla Walla Valley Seven Hills Vineyard 2003
92 points | \$30 | 651 cases made | Red

Ripe and resonant with minty, cedary cherry, plum and currant flavors, finishing rich and beautifully integrated, the tannins polished and the flavors sailing on nicely. Best from 2008 through 2013.—*H.S.*

Mark Ryan

The Dissident Columbia Valley 2004
91 points | \$25 | 450 cases made | Red

Firm, a wine with a straight backbone and lots of cedar and spice running through focused, lively currant and blackberry flavors. Best from 2008 through 2014.—*H.S.*

Russell Creek

Tributary Washington 2004
91 points | \$20 | 940 cases made | Red

Rich and distinctive, a supple red with layers of cherry, currant, mint and cedar flavors, plus a cinnamon note that adds interest to the long, focused finish. Best from 2008 through 2014.—*H.S.*

Five Star

Merlot Columbia Valley 2004
90 points | \$30 | 784 cases made | Red

Velvety, rich, spicy, with smoky berry and roasted red pepper flavors, showing blackberry and vanilla notes on the long finish. Drink now through 2012.—*H.S.*

Hogue

Merlot Columbia Valley Reserve 2003
90 points | \$30 | 1,832 cases made | Red

Firm, with toast-accented blackberry and plum flavors that keep singing through the chewy finish. Needs time to soften. Best from 2008 through 2011.—*H.S.*

Russell Creek

Syrah Columbia Valley Winemakers Select 2004
90 points | \$35 | 400 cases made | Red

Bright and juicy, with lively blackberry and cherry flavors. Pepper and white chocolate notes on the fine-grained finish. Drink now through 2012.—*H.S.*

Woodinville Wine Cellars

Syrah Washington 2003
90 points | \$28 | 325 cases made | Red

Smooth and spicy, a polished Syrah that revs up the bittersweet chocolate-scented currant and plum flavors. Long finish. Drink now through 2011.—*H.S.*

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.

Krug

Brut Blanc de Blancs Champagne Clos du Mesnil 1995
97 points | \$600 | 120 cases imported | Sparkling

A barrel-fermented style, this shows a slight oxidative character, along with whole-grain toast, ginger, exotic citrus and honey notes. It's big and dry, with a firm structure and tactile sensation on the finish. Terrific harmony and length. A Champagne for food. Drink now through 2015. *From France.*—B.S.

Duval-Leroy

Brut Champagne Femme 1995
96 points | \$110 | 1,800 cases made | Sparkling

A gorgeous Champagne from start to finish. Supple, creamy and stylish, it exhibits lemon candy, vanilla, coffee and hazelnut aromas and flavors. It's fresh and beautifully balanced, with a long coffee and butter-scotch aftertaste. Drink now through 2020. *From France.*—B.S.

Chasseur

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Sylvia's 2004
95 points | \$52 | 97 cases made | Red

Fragrant plum, blueberry and raspberry scents are fresh and enticing. The flavors are rich on the palate without becoming heavy. Lively acidity and fine-grained tannins keep it delicate yet its intensity unveils extra layers of depth and complexity. Drink now through 2011. *From California.*—J.L.

Chasseur

Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast Joyce 2004
95 points | \$55 | 73 cases made | Red

A sensational effort, distinct and complete. Fragrant raspberry and blueberry flavors are amazingly vivid, supple and polished, with pretty, delicate hints of fresh earth, berry stem, floral and anise flavors that gain momentum, turning more complex and layered with each sip. Drink now through 2009. *From California.*—J.L.

Wine Spectator's Tastings

Wine Spectator reviews more than 12,000 wines each year; our senior editors comprise the most experienced staff of professional wine tasters of any publication in the world. Each editor specializes in the wines of specific regions; their initials identify the taster of each wine reviewed.

We always taste wines blind, in our offices in San Francisco, Napa, New York and Tuscany, and in the vineyard regions of Europe. This is your guarantee that a wine's reputation or price does not influence its score. We score wines using our 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: Southern France, Portugal

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: Loire Valley, Rhône Valley, South Africa, South America

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

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

James Suckling European bureau chief, Italy
Joined *Wine Spectator* in 1981. Tasting beat: Bordeaux, Italy, Port

Tasting staff: **Jo Cooke** (Veneto), **Daniel Sogg**