



Review Round-Up –| January 2008

Cline Cellars Ancient Vines Zinfandel California 2006

Nicely fruited from the outset and focused on ripe blackberries, boysenberries and a hint of juicy plums, this mid-density effort is rounded at the front of the palate and firmed up well by acidity at the back end. It combines the ripeness of latter-day Zin with the firmer, tighter structure of earlier days and will make a fine mate to pastas in red sauces.

88 Points

Cline Zinfandel Sonoma County 2005

Riper and softer in fruit than the wine above and somewhat on the syrupy side for its efforts, this full-bodied wine is also higher in coarse tannins and dries out at the finish. It is hard to like now and does not convince that the needed bottle aging will bring it complete redemption.

85 Points

Hendry Primitivo Block 24 Napa Valley 2005

Hendry once again hits the mark with Primitivo, and, as in the past, the wine is both unstinting in ripeness and very long on deep fruit and wonderfully rich oak. It is supple and surprisingly polished given its riper bias, and it has so much fruity mass that its claim of 15.8% alcohol goes nearly unnoticed. Late-arriving tannins lend structural spine without adding undue toughness, it is the kind of wine that will have unrepentant fans of very big Zins simply swooning even now.

93 Points

Hendry Block 7 Napa Valley 2005

There is much to enjoy in the berry-like focus possessed by both the mid-volume aromas and berryish/dried grape flavors of this highly ripened wine, and we like its trim of mildly peppery spice as well. We are less enamored, however, with the acidic stiffness and intrusive heat that crop up in the latter palate.

87 Points

Hendry Block 28 Napa Valley 2004

High hopes and expectations are raised by the deep, very well-defined, berry and spice aromas here, but the wine disappoints in the mouth by being overly harsh and tannic, and what fruit manages to appear draws up short and is cut off by bitterness and trailing heat.

85 Points

Seghesio Zinfandel Sonoma County 2006

Well-defined berryish fruit is the centerpiece in both the outgoing aromas and the full, fleshy flavors of this weighty effort, yet, for all of its volume and richness, it stays nicely on the varietal track with its background notes of dry spices and briar. It is youthfully exuberant and somewhat juicy in character.

84 Points

Windmill Old Vine Zinfandel Lodi 2006

24% Petite Sirah. The rather pushy form of Petite Sirah shows in this wine, and it helps separate its blocky, spicy, dried blackberry character from most other inexpensive Zinfandels. This wine has both body and evident tannin to go with its noticeably ripe and rustic personality, and whereas wines at this price tend towards easy simplicity, this one is raring to take on heavier dishes. **GOOD VALUE**

86 Points

Alexander Valley Vineyards Viognier Alexander Valley 2005

An odd twist of something halfway towards sour and medicinal joins unusual banana-like smells here along with a scent of cheap perfume. Full on the palate and rounded to start, then finding a tighter line towards the back but never possessed of convincing fruit, this is an easy one to pass by.

84 Points

Cline Viognier California 2006

Youthful, peachy, slightly simple and quite likeable aromas with solid varietal credentials start this wine off on the right foot, and its clean, rounded qualities in the mouth return the favor. It is a bit on the quiet side for full commendation, but it comes with a very inviting price and promises to work well with lighter foods.

GOOD VALUE

86 Points

DuMol Viognier Lia Russian River Valley 2005

Picking up a touch of the grape's floral, almost tropical side, this wine smells of wild flowers and peaches with a hint of papaya in the mix as well. It is full-bodied in feel and tilts a touch towards the fleshy end of the spectrum, and its ripe, juicy flavors win the day. A minor bit of finishing heat will disappear with dishes like chicken basted with a fruity sauce.

91 points

Incognito Viognier Lodi 2006

Too ripe by half but concentrated in character if not exactly on point, the forward aromas display decidedly murky notes and an amorphous sweetness that plays a further role in the viscous, fleshy flavors and noticeably too hot and slightly bitter finish. There is depth aplenty in this wine, but it is not accompanied by vitality.

85 Points

Pride Mountain Viognier Sonoma County 2006

A light note of honey overlies suggestions of blossomy fruit and scattered notes of sweet hardwood spice in the distinctive aromas of this rich and well-ripened Viognier, and its fully-stuffed flavors convey plenty of fruity mass and show an enriching streak of honey running their length. Fattened with lots of glycerin and quite full on the palate, the wine tightens up in the latter going and sports a lengthy, oak-infused, ripe-fruit finish.

90 Points

Zaca Mesa Viognier Santa Ynez Valley 2006

This wine's aromas have it all-flowers, hints of white peaches and Fuji apples, a layer of hardwood richness and even a whiff of tropical fruit, and there is equal joy to come in the youthfully vital, slightly viscous yet always balanced flavors. Like many of its coastal brethren, it has the firm, still developing fruit to improve for a couple of years in the bottle, and this wine is accompanied by the added pleasure of an invitingly low price for what it offers. **GOOD VALUE**

92 Points