



Review Round-Up | April 2007

Fisher Coach Insignia Napa Valley 2003

Inviting elements of black cherries and raspberries are overlain in the nose by a rich veneer of cocoa, caramel, and sweet toast, and, while the wine similarly does not stint on creamy oak in its flavors, optimally ripened fruit is what drives the well-focused working from beginning to end. Fill weight, fleshly and nicely extracted, it has a tannic underpinnings of a wine meant for age. Leave it alone for at least three or four years and expect it to deepen for a decade or more.

93 Points

Frog's Leap Napa Valley 2004

Very consistent in focus with lots of deep, curranty fruit that is framed by lots of rich oak and nice touches of tobacco and dark soils, this very solid, medium–full-bodied youngster is built along sturdier lines and sports plenty of obvious tannin. It never lets go of its defining fruit, however, and is no tougher than young Cabernet is wont to be, and it comes with recommendations for five to ten years of age.

90 Points

Paul Hobbs Napa Valley 2004

Quintessentially Californian in its extravagant richness and its wholly outgoing manner, this big, bold, highly ripened and oh so deeply fruited Cabernet marries loads of lush, black-cherry fruit with sweet oak to spare. Its full and very fleshly in texture, yet it finds just enough slightly soft tannins for structure, and its very long, very flavorful finish is brimming with fruit, it could be enjoyed early on with juicy cuts of lamb or beef, but it will be better yet if patience is practiced and is set aside for three to five years in the cellar.

91 Points

Honig Napa Valley 2004

Clean and balanced, reasonably mannered in approach despite a turn to ripeness in its light-medium intensity aromas and flavors, this quiet bottling displays more structural presence than central fruit in the mouth, its ending stiffness calls for cellaring, but its limited heart is not encouraging.

85 Points

Cliff Lede Claret Napa valley 2004

Ripe Cherry smells with herbal and peppery shadings make the first impressions here and a touch of creamy oak adds its own bit of magic. The wine is quite full weight and very much on the plump, fleshy side in feel, and, not surprisingly, takes on a hint of chocolate in its generous, somewhat hotted-up flavors. Still, fruit and richness win the day

87 Points

Miner the Oracle Napa Valley 2003

52% Cabernet Sauvignon; 31% Merlot; 17% Cabernet Franc. This masterful blend of Bordelaise varietals fixes on very deep and fairly classic Cabernet fruit while finding nuances of herbs, briary spice and just the right measure of complementary oak within its layered and involving mix. Its fraction of Merlot is made manifest by way of its plump and polished palatal feel, and its long, characterful finish is firmed by perfectly integrated tannins. Despite its many immediate charms, the wine promises more and better to come with cellaring.

93 Points

Miner Oakville 2004

8% Cabernet Franc. Miner's big, very outgoing Cabernet places its emphasis on ripeness and rich oak, but beneath its immediate sweetness, it shows a solid measure of persistent black currant fruit. If presently roughed up by both tannin and evident heat at the finish, it finds plenty of fruit powering through at the end, and it had all of the depth and essential extract it needs to age comfortably for half-dozen years.

91 Points

Shafer One Point Five Stages Leap District 2004 Napa Valley

Long on currants and cherries and long on very rich oak, this juicy, abundantly fruity opus sports fine Cabernet structure and, despite undisguised finishing heat, it never once wanders away to softness. Its ample tannins disqualify it from near-term drinking, but they are neither so hard nor so imposing that they call the wine's capacity for age into question, and, while we expect that it will begin to open after three or four years, its best lies further down the road.

91 Points

Turnbull Napa Valley 2004

Real expectation and excitement are raised by this well-made youngster's concentrated aromas of cassis, smoke, mint, dark soils and dried cherries, and its expansive, deeply-filled flavors fully live up to promise. Already praiseworthy both for its real range of character, its luscious fruit and for the way its many pieces fit together, the wine is solidly structured and shows no storage of youthfully gruff tannin. It is built to get better for a number of years, and it comes with a recommendation for five to eight years of cellaring.

95 Points

Breggo Savoy Vineyard Anderson Valley 2005

Led in the nose by a quiet measure of fresh, green-apple fruit, this nicely extracted, medium-full-bodied wine shows a bit more weight and richness once in the mouth than its aromas predict. It conveys a good sense of ripeness while keeping its sights fixed on fruit, and its complementary appointment of oak serves to enrich, without threatening that fruit. It holds well at the finish and will lose its slight edge on finishing coarseness with another six to twelve months of age.

88 Points

Clos Pegase Hommage Mitsuko's Vineyard 2004 Carneros Napa Valley

Generous with its appley and quietly tropical fruit scents and gaining a valuable boost in richness and in range from creamy oak, hints of butter and roasted nuts, this outgoing, full-bodied effort is somewhat coating in palate feel and reiterates all of the deep, engaging facets that showed to such prominence in its aromas. It is long and a touch hot at the end, but its solid construction makes it a good choice to partner with salmon napped with beurre blanc.

91 Points

Clos Pegase Hommage Mitsuko's Vineyard Caneros 2005 Napa Valley

Hints of vanilla and clove sit to the side of mild, ripe apple and per-like elements in the comparatively subdued aromas of this slow-to-start offering, but, once in the mouth, the wine shows more intensity and volume than billed. Its well-woven flavors of apple, lemons and spicy oak are very well-focused and continuous throughout, and a bit of glycerin contributes a note of oily richness in feel.

88 Points

Dariouh Napa Valley 2005

Hard-charging oak steals scene from the start here and fruit never quite seems to catch up. That said, the wine is very ripe and tremendously rich, true to the winery style, it shows plenty of body and palatal weight. Its slight want of fruit is confirmed at the finish as unbuffered heat pushes through, yet its richness carries the day.

87 Points

Du Mol Chloe Russian River Valley 2004 Ritchie Vineyard and Dutton Ranch

While none of the Du Mol bottlings go wanting for stuffing or compelling depth, this very beautifully focused, fruit-laden effort gets the nod as the best of a very good bunch. Its layered aromas of apples and cream are accented with mildly mineral notes, and its precise oak- and-fruit flavors are buoyed by perfectly placed acids. Its scant touch of last-minute heat is small price to pay for this kind of richness, and it seems safe bet that further refinement will come with a few years of cellaring.

93 Points

Du Mol Clare Carneros 2004 Hyde Vineyard

Here is a complex, multi-faceted Chardonnay that reminds that richness and depth do not presuppose heavy handedness or excessive ripeness. From its fruity, oak-lifted nose to its concentrated flavors of green apples, less and cream , the wine exhibits very good range and hints at more to come with a few years of age. Like its mates, it is presently roughed up by a bit of heat at the finish, and it is not the stuff to be paired with delicate dishes.

92 Points

Du Mol Isobel Green Valley Sonoma County 2004 Charles Heintz Vineyard

A bit more withdrawn, but no less complex than its siblings, this big, but tightly wound youngster is packed with concentrated, ripe-apple fruit and filled out with a full measure of comparatively spicy oak. It is both weighty and a bit ragged in feel, and its mix of alcohol and acidity makes for a little more coarseness that needs be at the end. Happily, it has the fruity substance required for real success, and either age or service with richly sauced seafoods would make moot its slightly lack of polish.

91 Points

Flowers Sonoma Coast 2005

Polish and easy-to-access appley fruit are the strong suits of this ripe but carefully balanced bottling, and its comfortable fruit is given a slight boost in richness by careful measure of mildly creamy oak. Its youthful freshness very much works in its favor, and, if unlikely to fade anytime soon, it is a thoroughly likeable wine right now.

88 Points

Paul Hobbs Richard Dinner Vineyard 2005 Sonoma Mountain

Loads of creamy, roasted vanilla oak takes precedence over comparatively lean, lemon-tinged, green apple fruit in both aroma and flavors of this rich, slightly viscous, full-bodied Chardonnay, yet there is nothing tight or restrained about the wide-open flavors that follow. There is, if anything, a slight lack of brightness and energy here that directs it to near-term service rather than to lengthy time in the cellar, and its oak tags it as one team up with the likes of richly sauced salmon or savory duck entrees.

90Points**Paul Hobbs Russian River Valley 2005**

We have come to expect expressive, full-blown Chardonnays of high ripeness and high oak from Mr. Hobbs, and this dramatic wine meets all expectations. It concentrated aromas of baked apples and sweet spices are followed up with deep, wonderfully rich flavors that are long on juicy fruit and extravagant oak. For all of its weight and considerable stuffing, however, it is firmed by fine finishing acids and shows a keen sense of balance rarely found in wines of its ripeness and size. There is no question but that is an involving wine now, but it has room for two to four years of further improvement.

92Points