



Review Round-Up | February 2007

Bergstrom Cumberland Reserve 2005 Willamette Valley

Fans of high ripeness and extravagant oak are unlikely to be swept off their feet by this carefully composed wine, but those who appreciate well-defined varietal fruit will find plenty to like. Nicely ripened, concentrated and built along the slightly firmer lines that typically define Oregon Pinot Noir, this bottling comes with a little more richness and range than that usually shown by neighbors, and should blossom with a few years in bottle.

89 Points

Breggo Anderson Valley 2005

It may be the least expensive of the three Breggo offerings, but this exceptionally well-balanced and deeply fruited beauty is our pick of the bunch. From its captivating aromas of vanilla beans and ripe cherries to its plush palatal feel and its lengthy finish, it hits all of the varietal marks, and its staying power suggests that it will only get better over the next few years.

91 Points

Breggo Ferrington Vineyard Anderson Valley 2005

Like its companion bottling from the Savoy vineyard, this big, mouthfilling Pinot is very much keyed on ripeness, yet, in this case, there is a full measure of well-defined cherries to keep it on the varietal track. Its accessible and very generous flavors are decked out with lots of sweet oak spice, and its trim of finishing heat is buffered by plenty of persistent fruit. Not one for service with delicate dishes, it will show at its best when teamed with savory lamb entrees.

91 Points

Breggo Savoy Vineyard Anderson Valley 2005

The ripest of the Breggo bunch, this forthright Pinot smacks of brown sugar and cherry preserves with subtle accents of dried flowers emerging here and there. Its initial bent to softness is checked by a welcome bit of latter-palate acid, and its slight catch of last-minute heat is buffered by a lasting note of very ripe cherries.

89 Points

Domaine Serene Yamhill Cuvee 2004 Willamette Valley

Rich and very sweet oak spice is underlain by solid, if slow-to-emerge black-cherry fruit in the nose, and the two are nicely aligned in the youthful, medium-deep flavors that follow. Although it is firmly structured with pushy tannins emerging in the finish, the wine has plenty of flesh and real fruity substance and should continue to grow for as many as a half-dozen years.

87 Points

Flowers Sonoma Coast 2005

Aromas of candied cherries and sweet plums lead the way in a nose that also shows vanillin oakiness and an odd touch of green apples. Medium-full on the palate and supple to enter but then increasingly firm in the latter going, the wine reiterates its slight green edge in pert red cherry flavors and a bright, almost brisk quality at the finish.

87 Points

Gunlach-Bundschu Rheinfarm Vineyard 2004 Sonoma Valley

In its rush to richness, this ripe, slightly syrupy wine gives the shortest of shrifts to well-defined varietal fruit and brings a note of heat into play. Yet it is rich, and its silky smooth feel and wide-open style make it a tasty and likable near-term mate for simple roast beef.

86 Points

Lockwood Block 7 Monterey 2005

Mid, slightly sweet oak and scant touches of herbs combine in the nose with direct, cherry-like fruit, while the open, medium-density flavors of this friendly effort are almost wholly keyed on straightforward cherries. If never wine of special depth or range, it is smooth and easy in feel, and it will drink nicely with milder meats in the coming year.

86 Points

Morgan Twelve Clones Santa Lucia Highlands 2005

If not an especially flamboyant wine, this latest edition from talented hand of winemaker Dan Lee is absolutely solid in ripe yet balanced varietal fruit in both its rich, medium depth aromas and its invitingly velvety palatal feel. A hint of piquancy at the end keeps things alive and directs the wine towards service with lighter meats like veal roasts.

89 Points

Ponzi Tavola Willamette Valley 2005

Very much built along the firmer, slightly leaner lines that often typify Oregon Pinot Noirs, this pert cherry-like wine is keyed on vitality more than on extract or mass. It is not an especially age worthy wine, but its lively manner and its straightforward fruit make it a good choice for drinking soon with the likes of richer poultry or salmon.

85 Points

Siduri Ewald Vineyard Russian River Valley 2005

Fairly ripe and fairly forward in scent with cherries leading the way, this bottling breaks from the gate in fine fruity form, but tightens and drops off the pace in the stretch and finishes on a slightly coarse note. To its credit, it is still very young and its winsome initial fruit wines it a few years of patience as it is likely to smooth out with age.

88 Points

Du Mol Russian River Valley 2004

Not a winery that does things by half measures, DuMol delivers yet another in its string of exceptionally well-stuffed and entirely compelling offerings. High in volume and large in scale, this one smells of caramel apples, smoke and sweet cream, and it lives up to expectations on the palate with an oily, mouthfilling entry and deep, ripe and rich flavors that are kept in balance by firming acids and by the wine's extraordinary continuity and consistency from front to back.

93 Points

Miner Napa Valley 2005

Vanilla cream and hardwood spices enrich the medium-volume appley aromas at work here. Fleshy in feel with generous acidity in support in the wine's latter palate, this one is rich and open and has depth to spare. A slightly bitter note at the end suggests service with richly sauced chicken.

88 Points

Morgan "Highland" Santa Lucia Highlands 2005

Light to medium in volume and kissed by lemon-drop sweetness in its focused but slightly narrow, youthfully fruit aromas, the wine is fairly full in feel and entirely well-balanced on the palate where its clean, lightly oaked, apple and citrus flavors hold sway. Try it with grilled sole or snapper.

87 Points

Patz & Hall Hyde Vineyard Carneros 2004

Ripe, pulpy, appley and lightly citrusy fruit tones lead the way in fairly accessible aromas sporting both creamy and toasted grain nuances. Nicely balanced, somewhat direct in style and just a bit on the chalky side in feel under its initially fleshy impressions, this one has the depth of fruit and the keenness of focus to deserve a place in the cellar.

90 Points

Patz & Hall Napa Valley 2005

Crisp appley scents and hints of roasted grains lead the way in this wine's mid-volume aromas and are followed on the palate by a somewhat supple entry and a firmer, never hard, texture as the wine crosses the palate. It is a pleasant wine overall, and its character will open up further and round out over the next one to three years.

88 Points

Patz & Hall Durell Vineyard Sonoma Valley 2005

Light to medium in volume and focused on green apples with a kiss of creamy oak for richness in its aromas, this wine has a full fleshy feel on the palate with buttery, spicy, oak-driven, quietly fruity flavors but drifts into a bit of dryness at the end. Still, it is a wine of size and richness.

87 Points

Pine Ridge Dijon Clones Carneros Napa Valley 2005

Its complex aromas display notes of smoke, roasted grain, a bit of fried herbs and varied citrusy fruits, and its fairly rich flavors similarly show a good range of lees, oak and fruit. A solid, well-filled, but still very young wine, it is not yet as keenly focused as it might be, but its balance, its obvious depth and its sense of vitality combine to make a few years of positive development a foregone conclusion.

90 Points

Pride Mountain Napa Valley 2005

There are clear family ties between this ambitiously oaked wine and its sibling above, but this one is both a bit fruitier in content and slightly more temperate in ripeness. If not quite as blustery, it is also not quite as rich, and it coarsens a touch at the finish. It too wants drinking with bolder food and will hold its own with sauced salmon.

88 Points

Ramey Hyde Vineyard Carneros Napa Valley 2004

Intense, wonderfully concentrated, bright Fuji apple fruitness is at center stage from start to finish here while fine, lightly laid-on oak provides a graceful bit of enriching sweetness. The wine has plenty of weight and body yet is so carefully put together that it never comes across as the least bit heavy. Its combination of balance and continuity bodes quite well for the future, and it is safe to assume that this very good wine will be better yet with a few years of age.

94 Points**Ramey Ritchie Vineyard Russian River Valley 2004**

We can see some of the same firmness and tight linearity of the Hudson Vineyard bottling here, but whereas that wine is a bit sparing in fruit, this one comes with amplified sense of fresh apples and pears, and it keeps oaks to a quiet, complementary role. Solid, alive and entirely capable of aging well, this vigorous youngster can safely be set aside for another two or three years of positive development.

89 Points**Ramey Hudson Vineyard Carneros Napa Valley 2004**

This tight, firmly structured Chardonnay is decidedly leaner and less expressive than has been the norm from Ramey. It is sure to soften and expand if given in the bottle, but even with age it looks like the wine will stay on the lively, but slightly subdued side of things, and we recommend that it be tagged for service with fleshy white fish.

87 Points