



Review Round-Up –| September 2007

Girard Old Vine Napa Valley 2005

Full-bodied and rich in character and oriented to ripeness without going over the line into corpulence, this wine is a touch dry in its aromas but rounded and nicely fruited in its concentrated flavors and low-tannin, lingering finish.

89 Points

Joel Gott Dillian Ranch Amador County 2005

Very much showing the gruffness and unrefined style of classic Amador Zin, Mr. Gott's Dillian Ranch bottling is a fairly ripe, big-bodied wine, whose basic blackberry themes are accented with notes of briar, dark chocolate, spice and sweet oak. It is framed by toughening tannins yet does not relinquish its fruit.

87 Points

JC Cellars The Imposter California 2005

It's curious moniker suggests that this wine is somehow not what it seems, but there is little doubt that big Zin it is, and it is very much driven by ripeness. It leads with concentrated aromas of sweet berries, briar and cream, and it follows on with ripe berry flavors that are generously filled out with oak. Very rich, but at the same time just a touch heavy, it has the extract needed to hide alcohols, and it avoids the common big-Zin pitfalls of coarseness and heat.

90 Points

JC Cellars Arrowhead Mountain Vineyard 2005

From its sweet, berry compote qualities to its profound bias to dark chocolate, this full-bodied Zin is geared to almost outlandish ripeness. It is a wine that will no doubt win praise from fans of its late-harvest style, but those of us who believe that more is not necessarily better, it is simply too much of a study in dried grape concentration.

86 Points

Seghesio Cortina Dry Creek Valley 2005

A two-star winner in more vintages than not, this one falls a bit lower in the ranking in 2005 because its ripe demeanor comes with excess of dried grape character and a slight reduction in the outgoing fruit that has featured in its better efforts. Withal, the wine will certainly please fans of the style and is not going to disappoint all devotees of the winery.

88 Points

Seghesio Home Ranch Alexander Valley 2005

On the one hand, it is easy enough to argue that this very ripe wine is a little too hot and a little too coarse, but it is also true that it exhibits a fine sense of focus and depth and has a solid center of blackberry fruit. It starts out on a soft note but finds structure and balance as it crosses the palate, and its concentrated flavors show stamina enough to make a good case that a few years of age will be rewarded.

88 Points

Brewer-Clifton Mount Carmel Sta. Rita Hills 2005

Everything about this wine screams concentration from its deep golden color to its buttery, richly oaked, caramel apple aromas and its full-bodied, oily, viscous feel on the palate. It comes as no surprise then that the wine also carries a noticeable edge of heat in its latter palate and finish and that its generosity of size and spirit make it into a useful foil for small birds stuffed with foie gras and wild rice.

88 Points

Brewer-Clifton Sweeny Canyon Sta. Rita Hills 2005

Even riper yet is this full-bodied, viscous, too close to ponderous bottling, and in addition to testing the limits of acceptability as to size, heat, it is beset by bothersome smells of vitamin pill and excessive toastiness. Its finish is overwhelmingly hot and carries bitter and chalky notes as well.

82 Points

Miner Wild Yeast Napa Valley 2005

Complex notes of ripe apples, crème brûlée, toasted bread and savory spices are combined in the deeply framed, rich aromas of this somewhat full-bodied, mouthfilling and well-balanced wine. It follows on the palate with ripe and wide-ranging flavors and has both the range and the depth to be a great mealtime choice.

95 Points

Martinelli Russian River Valley 2005

There is a nice sense of ripe-apple fruitiness at work in the clean and comparatively refined aromas here, yet “refinement” turns to understatement on the palate, and the wine runs out of real interest a little too soon. It picks up an edge of coarseness after beginning on a fairly rounded note, and finishing dryness tags it as one to drink fairly soon.

86 Points

Pine Ridge Epitome Carneros Napa Valley 2005

This one strikes us as a wine of two minds, and neither of them has figured out how to talk to each other. On the one hand, the aromas and flavors suggested rich, pulpy fruit of ripe apples, and, on the other, there are suggestions of a tight, still undeveloped streak. Both halves have their virtues, and time could ultimately bring this one into form, but its price is substantial, and the risks are commensurately high.

87 Points

Shafer Red Shoulder Ranch Carneros 2005 Napa Valley

This marriage of vintner and vineyard more often than not results in big, somewhat swaggering Chardonnay of emphatic ripeness, yet, in this particular outing, this wine shows a little more polish and a bit less bluster than its norm. Nicely ripened and fairly full-bodied with luscious Gala apple main message, it is very balanced and buffers its slight edge of heat with fruity substance to spare.

90 Points