



Shafer 2004 One Point Five Cabernet Sauvignon (Stages leap District)

As of this vintage, Shafer has done away with their Napa Valley Cabernet bottling and replaced it with this proprietary named 100% Cab. It's junior version of Hillside Select, from different vineyards and not as oaky. But it's nearly as massive in black currants, cherries and carob bean, a dry wine that never loses elegance. Need a year or so to become less tight and more expressive.

93 Points

Voss 2005 Pinot Noir (Martinborough)

An atypical lush, full-bodied Pinot, this harkens back to the winery's excellent 2001 in style, ripe and plummy, yet with complex notes of coffee, meat, dried herbs and cracked pepper. Long on the finish, where hints of black tea emerge.

92 Points

Cline 2006 Mourvedre Rose (Contra Costa County)

With its pretty pink color and inviting raspberry sorbet flavor, this is very drinkable. It's light in body and delicately structured, with some slight sweetness in the finish.

85 Points

Perrin & Fils 2006 Reserve Rose (Cotes –du-Rhone)

This is 60% Cinsault- an unusually high proportion- but perhaps that is why this shows so much freshness. The balance is a blend of Syrah, Grenache and Mouvedre, and the result is a very fruit-forward wine with loads of watermelon and cherry fruit upfront, followed by hints of peach and chocolate on the finish.

88 Points

Richioli 2005 Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley)

Starts with a dazzling array of bright, pure aromas of cherries, loganberries and raspberry jam, with intricate complexities of cola, pumpkin pie, nutmeg, cinnamon and smoky oak. The flavors are similar, and the wine is totally dry and elegant. For the winery's villages-style, Pinot, it's a real beauty.

90 Points

Ramey 2004 Pedegral Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Oakville)

This is notable for two things: It shows the extreme ripeness of the vintage, and also showcases the way even the ripest Oakville grapes veer toward darker-hued stone fruits and berries of balance and finesse. This soft, rich, fat, opulent cab burst with cassis, spicy purple plum, black cherry, dark chocolate and sweet licorice flavors, and is best now and for the next six to eight years.

93 Points

Ramey 2004 Jericho Canyon Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley)

The wine shows a soft ripeness and depth of flavor, yet is balanced, with good acidity. Gorgeous structure; it is already forward and fleshy in cassis, raspberry, cherry, milk chocolate and smoky oak flavors. A touch of funky raw meat adds a complexing note.

92 Points

Ramey 2004 Claret Red Blend (Napa Valley)

David Ramey call this his entry-level Cabernet. It's a blend of all five Bordeaux varieties, with a drop of Syrah, and has softness and immediate appeal. Complex and rich in dark stone fruit, berry, dark chocolate coffee and spice flavors, it's drinking beautifully now.

90 Points

PlumpJack 2004 Cabernet Sauvignon (Oakville)

This is the winery's regular estate Cab, and it's good, elegant wine. Dry and balanced, it shows blackberry, cassis and new oaky, smoky flavors; it's rich in smooth, ripe, dense tannins. It's masculine wine in need of some time in the cellar, through not one of PlumpJack's greater Cabernets, marked as it is by some sharpness.

89 Points

Ramey 2004 Larkmead Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley)

This may not be especially ageable because it's soft and forward. But for current drinking and a few years out, it rewards for a wealth of flavor and richness. The wine has the blackberry marmalade, raspberry tart, milk chocolate truffle, cappuccino and new oaky flavors that many very ripe California reds show, but its pedigree is in the tannic structure.

89 Points

Zaca Mesa 2004 Cuvee Red Wine (Santa Ynez Valley)

A Chateauf-neuf-style blend of Grneache, Mourvedre, Syrah and Cinsault, coopered in some new French oak, this is a richly drinkable red wine. Soft and dry, it shows complex cherry, berry and spice flavors and an intricate structure, and will play beautifully against a grilled steak.

87 Points

Summers 2005 Villa Adriana Vineyard Charbono (Napa Valley)

Charbono makes a rustic, but long-lived, wine in California. Few specialize in it, but Summer does. The '05 is a big, black, inky wine, as tannic as Petite Sirah but earthier and softer. The flavors are of carob, blackberries and coffee. Totally dry.

85 Points

Ramey 2004 Ritchie Vineyard Chardonnay (Russian River Valley)

There's a bracing, salty tang of the sea in this fog-cooled Chard. It has an almost Islay Scotch quality, although the pineapple, lemon sorbet and new vanilla oak flavors are distinctly varietal. Hard to exaggerate the creamy richness, the way the wine glides across the palate with racy richness.

94 Points

Rochioli 2005 Rachaele's Vineyard Chardonnay (Russian River Valley)

From Hiller planting on the steep slopes of the winery's estate vineyard, this is a compact young Chardonnay. It's intense in lemon mousse, green apple, key-lime pie and vanilla caramel, with a mineral, tangy bite of flint or metal. Finishes very dry and crisp.

94 Points

Rochioli 2005 South River Vineyard Chardonnay (Russian River Valley)

An intensely fruity, oaky and dramatic Chard. It has pear liqueur, vanilla, butterscotch and crème brûlée aromas, and drinks intensely rich and powerful. Yet it never loses its keen refinement and elegance. Finishes with a bite of crunchy, green-apple acidity.

93 Points

Rochioli 2005 River Block Chardonnay (Russian River Valley)

This is the lightest of Rochioli's Chards, body-wise, and the softest. It has a melted butter mouthfeel, but it's a very layered, nuanced wine, with intense Meyer lemon, vanilla custard and smoky oak flavors, and has a gorgeous, voluptuous quality.

92 Points

Rochioli 2005 Estate Chardonnay (Russian River Valley)

Classic RRV Chard, showing bright aromas of green apples, pineapples, lemon and lime and roasted coconut, with rich vanilla cream and smoky butter notes, and that lovely, brisk acidity that makes the finish so clean.

89 Points

Lockwood 2005 Chardonnay (Monterey County)

Oaky and simple, with apricot and tropical fruit flavors and a creamy texture brightened with clean acidity. This is a pretty good price for a fresh Monterey Chard.

84 Points

Zaca Mesa 2005 Roussanne (Santa Ynez Valley)

On the one-dimensional side, but rewarding for a wealthy array of citrus and floral flavors, in a dry, crisp and fairly oaky wine. Shows an elegance that suggests rosemary chicken with a rich, buttery polenta.

86 Points

Adelsheim 2005 Elizabeth's Reserve Pinot Noir (Willamette Valley)

An authoritative, meaty nose sets off this dense, rather tannic Pinot Noir. A firmly built wine that suggests layered fruit, still young, but tightly packed. Hints of rock and herb lie within, all waiting for some additional hours of breathing time and/or years of bottling age to pass.

90 Points

Witness Tree 2005 Pinot Noir (Willamette Valley)

Very clean and pretty, showcasing lovely varietal flavors of cherries and berries. There's a well-managed earthy component, with suggestions of forest floor and organic matter, and the tannins are ripe and fine. A very fine bottle for the price.

90 Points

Domaine Serene 2004 Grace Vineyard Pinot Noir (Willamette Valley)

The Grace Vineyard bottling has a devoted following, and always stands out among its Oregon peers for being exceedingly California in style. That is to say it's ripe, sweet, forward, round and buttery.

This is Pinot Noir done up in a supremely fruity and accessible style. It's plenty ripe, sweet and fruity, but doesn't go past that into something more textural and complex.

89 Points

Domaine Serene 2004 Evenstad Reserve Pinot Noir (Willamette Valley)

This vintage is a step or two lighter than the 2003 Evenstad Reserve, medium in color and weight. It's done in Domaine Serene's typical style, emphasizing sweet, soft, pretty fruit backed with buttery oak.

88 Points

Doamine Serene 2004 Etolie Vineyard Chardonnay (Willamette Valley)

Made from Dijon clones, this immediately hits the palate with broad, buttery, oaky flavors that seem over the top for the fruit. But give it a couple of hours to breathe and the fruit flows back into it,

bringing ripe, tangy apple, lemon, pineapple and tropical flavors to bear.

90 Points

Henschke 2004 Henry's Seven (Barossa)

Wonderfully spicy and complex on the nose, with scents of smoke, spice, mulled blackberries and a hint of caramel. This is round and full in the mouth without being heavy, with spice-driven flavors but also dark fruit flavors that finish firm, crisp and long.

90 Points

Slipstream 2005 Shiraz-Grenache (McLaren Vale)

A blend of 72% shiraz and 28% Grenache, this wine is full-bodied and creamy, yet has some dusty tannins on the finish. Take scents of prune and anise, add flavors of coffee and vanilla to make a reasonable complex, satisfying blend. Drink now, with rare beef or lamb.

89 Points

Voss 2005 Pinot Noir (Martinborough)

An atypically lush, full-bodied pinot, this Harkens back to the winery's excellent 2001 in style, ripe and plummy, yet with complex notes of coffee, meat, dried herbs and cracked pepper. Long on the finish, where hints of black tea emerge.

92 Points

Palliser Estate 2005 Pinot Noir (Martinborough)

Far and away the best Palliser Pinot Noir we've ever reviewed, the 2005 boasts complex, savory aromas and flavors that match ripe black cherry and plum fruit with peppery-herbal notes and hints of smoke, meat and brown sugar. The creamy, supple tannins are balanced by crisp acids and concentrated fruit on the long finish.

91 Points

Rust en Vrede 2005 Merlot (Stellenbosch)

This traditional, terroir-driven Merlot, heavy on the dark berry and mocha and with smooth, balanced tannins. Soft, warming spices are intertwined throughout, and the finish dry. There's structure and tannin here, but the wine is approachable.

88 Points

Hamilton Russell 2005 Pinot Noir (Walker Bay)

Dark fruit, licorice and spice give this wine depth but the overall character is very soft and integrated. There's intensity –the wine can age- but right now, it's sophisticated sip that will pair beautifully with food

89 Points