



Vina Sastre 2005 Roble (Ribera del Duero)

Sastre does not make mass-market, inexpensive wines; this is the base-level offering. And it's a delicious, moderately complex Ribera that is fat and fruity but also exotic and a touch beguiling. It will make an excellent accompaniment to basic grilled meats.

90 Points

Schramsberg 2003 Blanc de Blancs (North Coast)

This 100% Chardonnay is easily the best Schramsberg blanc de blancs I've ever reviewed. It's so rich and luxurious in subtle lime, peach, and brioche flavors, and so refined in its beautiful silky mouthfeel, and so long in the finish, you can't help but love it.

94 Points

Vina Sastre 2003 Crianza (Ribera del Duero)

Lots of size and smoothness are on display, and the bouquet is ample and fruity. In the mouth, there's forward berry fruit and snappy cherry riding more on the surface than down below. In fact, this wine runs more racy than hefty, with a touch of herbal essence blending with chocolate on the finish.

89 Points

Alion 2002 Ribera del Duero

Dark and pretty dense for an '02, with sweet aromas of baked plums, blueberry, sandalwood and exotic spices. The palate is ripe and fairly pure, showing black cherry and dark plum flavors. Really good for an off year, with touch of spice, chocolate and vanilla.

89 Points

Henschke 2003 Keyneton Estate Euphonium (Barossa)

This is primarily (70%) Shiraz, with a blend of Cab Sauvignon, Merlot and Cab Franc, but it comes across more like a Bordeaux blend. Vanilla and cedar notes from aging accent cassis fruit---- and there's a hint of mint as well. Medium-bodied, with a long, dusty yet mouthwatering finish.

89 Points

Sheep's Back 2002 Old Vine Shiraz (Barossa Valley)

The best vintage yet for this full-bodied Shiraz boasts complex, pungent aromas of hickory smoke, black pepper, filled out by ripe blackberries. In the mouth it's not quite as complex, but delivers plenty of intensity and a potent dose of supple tannins, ending crisp and clean.

89 Points

Langmeil 2004 Three Gardens Shiraz-Grenache-Mourvedre (Barossa)

Combines bright red cherry-berry flavors with hints of meatiness, cinnamon and some peppery-herbal notes. It's full-bodied, with a lush, creamy texture and a finish that shows a bit of alcoholic warmth, yet remains spicy and fresh.

86 Points

Reilly's 2004 Old Bushvine Grenache (Clare Valley)

Reilly's Clare Valley location tends to give its wines a little more focus than some of the wines coming out of nearby Barossa. Like in this fine example of old vine Grenache. Aromas of brandied cherries sprinkled with star anise add touches of chocolate and earth on the palate. It's full, round and generous, yet finishes firm and focused.

91 Points

Henschke 2004 Johann's Garden (Barossa Valley)

Despite weighting in at 15.5% alcohol, this wine carries it well, coming across as satisfying ample; zaftig without being heavy. The mouthfilling flavors of boysenberry and black cherry carry hints of vanilla and spice, with enough length on the finish to confirm the wine's quality.

88 Points

Two Hands 2005 Yesterday's Hero Grenache (Barossa Valley)

A forward, fruit-driven Grenache that seems destined for early consumption, Yesterday's Hero features scents of dust-covered, sun-warmed cherries and hints of carob and leather. The flavors are bright and bouncy-cherry and vanilla- with creamy texture and a tart, fresh finish.

88 Points

Haan 2004 Hanenhof Merlot-Cabernet Sauvignon-Cabernet Franc (Barossa Valley)

A potentially polarizing wine, with enough black cherry and cassis fruit and a creamy, supple texture, but also with strong greenish overtones of eucalyptus or mint, even a touch of green pea. Picks up cedar, vanilla and coffee shadings on the finish.

89 Points

Woop Woop 2006 Chardonnay (South Eastern Australia)

A great value in unoaked Chardonnay, the 2006 Woop Woop features understated peach and pineapple aromas but, really roars to life on the palate. It'd broad and mouthfilling, but not overly fat, firming up and gaining focus on the finish, where it effortlessly blends peach, melon and pineapple flavors.

87 Points

Calera 2003 Mills Pinot Noir (Mt. Harlan)

With some firm tannins, this is a wine decant for a few hours or age for up to eight years before it starts to lose its luscious fruit. The flavors are expansive, ranging from cherries and raspberries to cola, tamari and cinnamon spice. With its silky texture and long, spicy finish, this is a top-notch Pinot.

92 Points

Calera 2003 Reed Pinot Noir (Mt. Harlan)

O par with the excellent '02, '03 Reed is warmly ripe and delicious. It's drinkable now for the softness and forward cherry, pomegranate, rhubarb and root beer flavors, with a vanilla toasted oak edge, but has the balance and complexity to age for a good 10 years.

92 Points

Fisher 2003 Coach Insignia Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley)

Fisher's been on a roll with this wine. While the '03 could use greater structure in terms of acids and tannins, it has that plush, opulent Napa feel of world-class Cabernet, with its succulent cassis and chocolate flavors and sweet oak.

90 Points