



Henschke 2001 Hill of Grace Vineyard Shiraz (Eden Valley)

Readers fortunate enough to latch onto a bottle of the fewer than 300 imported to the U.S. will find themselves with a super bottle of Shiraz that manages to deliver great flavor intensity without relying on excessive weight. Notes of cracked black pepper and herbal nuances add complexity to the liquorous blackberry aromas, building in spicy intensity through the anise-inflected finish.

93 Points

Henschke 2003 Moutn Edelstone Vineyard Shiraz (Eden Valley)

A marvelous effort, this features a gorgeously seductive bouquet of herbs, spice, blueberries and stone fruit, all framed by a touch of cedary oak. In the mouth, it's creamy and lush, but well-structured, ending with a dose of dusty tannins and an extra blast of fruit. Has it all: ample complexity in finely judged balance for aging through 2015.

93 Points

Clos Pegase 2002 Graveyard Hill Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Carneros)

This shows crisp acids and fine balance. It's huge in blackberry and cherry fruit, but has the structural integrity and finesse that, quite simply, make it a very great Cabernet Sauvignon. **Editors' Choice.**

96 Points

Silverado 2003 Solo Cabernet Sauvignon (Stags Leap District)

Silverado's estate 2003 Cab is a worthy followup to their '02. So classy, only Napa makes Cabs this balanced, rich and ageworthy, and this one from Stags Leap defines Tchelistcheff's description of an iron fish in a velvet glove. **Cellar Selection.**

93 Points

Frog's Leap 2004 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley)

What a fine, elegant Cab. It's not a blockbuster, the kind of Cab designed to impress through sheer size, but one designed for the upscale table. Elegant and refined, it shows ripe currant, carob and oak flavors wrapped in soft, intricate tannins.

92 Points

Wildberry Estate 2004 Cabernet Sauvignon-Merlot (Margaret River)

Shows something of a Graves-like flavor profile, with dark coffee, earth and tobacco notes arrayed alongside cedar, cola and black cherry. It's a complex, medium-weight wine with enough soft tannin to stand up to rare beef or lamb, but enough elegant to please.

89 Points

Felton Road 2005 Pinot Noir (Central Otago)

Another top effort from winemaker Blair Walter, Felton Road's 2005 Pinot Noir feature masses of plum and blackberry fruit, hints of tea and smoke, and along, mouthwatering finish. It's a big, muscular wine that keeps a sense of elegance to its robust personality and flavors.

90 Points

Catalina Sounds 2006 Sauvignon Blanc (Marlborough)

Fans of tropical fruit will love this wine, and it's filled with variations on that theme: guava, banana, passion fruit and lime all play roles here in this zesty mouthful. The lime gives it a sense of focus and freshness on the finish.

86 Points

Cono Sur 2005 20 Barrels Limited Edition Pinot Noir (Casablanca Valley)

True, spicy and dark on the nose; the bouquets is on the money and doesn't make you question the wine's pedigree. In the mouth, bright red fruit is almost citrusy, while the finish offers laser-like cherry and raspberry notes with the essence of cola and pepper. A nice example of serious Chilean Pinot.

87 Points

Ramey 2004 Hudson Vineyard Chardonnay (Carneros)

Spectacularly ripe, showing an explosion of near-perfect fruit and smoky oak, balanced by crisply elegant acidity. Among the top ranks of Carneros Chards, the wine comes from manicured, low-yielding vines that, in this warm vintage, offer pineapple custard, lemon meringue, kiwi, crème brulee and vanilla spice flavors. There's something keenly firm and stony in the finish.

94 Points

Ramey 2004 Hyde Vineyard Chardonnay (Carneros)

Tasted alongside Ramey's Hudson bottling, this one's distinctly different, a softer, creamier, fleshier wine, but no less compelling. From the Napa side of the appellation, the wine is fat and oily in peach custard, butter-and-Cognac-sautéed pineapple and vanilla bean flavors, and while the charred oak is notable, it's fully in keeping with the wine's power.

93 Points

Stuhlmuller Vineyards 2005 Estate Chardonnay (Alexander Valley)

If you're familiar with the lush, complex Chards from Robert Young, this will ring a bell. It's layered in ripe mango, guava, nectarine, peach and smoky caramelized oak flavors, with an exotic taste of butter-sautéed bananas. All that flavor is nicely balanced by rich, lemony acidity.

92 Points

Clos Pegase 2004 Hommage Mitsuko's Vineyard Chardonnay

This Hommage upholds the tradition for its ripe fruit and firm, dry structure. Tropical fruits, nectarines, apricots, peaches and toasty oak lead to a long, spicy, complex finish.

91 Points

Clos Pegase 2005 Mitsuko's Vineyard Chardonnay (Carneros)

A beautiful Chardonnay with powerful tropical fruit, lime, nectarine, apricot and new oak flavors. Firmer acidity than you usually get from Carneros. This is a sleek, elegant wine, with a bracing streak of steely minerality. Kudos to owner Jan Shrem for putting it into a screwcap.

90 Points

Pine Ridge 2005 Dijon Clones Chardonnay (Carneros)

Better known for Cabernet, Pine Ridge has been doing an interesting job with Chardonnay. Every vintage is different, but usually worth a peek. The '05, from a cool year, is high in acidity, which gives the long hangtime peach, apricot and nectarine fruit a tart, jam-like boost.

87 Points

Frog's Leap 2005 Chardonnay (Napa Valley)

There's an earthy quality to this Chard, with herbal sage, dill and Bay laurel flavors to the underlying peach and apricot flavors. It's also a little on the soft side. Will benefit from decanting for a few hours, to take the edge off and let it breathe.

85 Points

Gainey 2005 Limited Selection Sauvignon Blanc (Santa Ynez Valley)

Another beautiful wine from Gainey, a great producer whose Sauvignon Blanc comes from one of our best terroirs for that variety in California. The aromas is so invitingly rich in lemongrass, pineapple zest, Key lime pie and coconut macaroon that you almost fear it won't follow up in the mouth, but it does. Bone dry, rich, zesty and clean, it seems to have benefited from the coolness of the vintage, in the way the beautifully ripe fruit is accented by crisp, flinty acidity. This is gorgeous, world-class Sauvignon Blanc.

Editors' Choice.

93 Points

Honig 2005 Sauvignon Blanc (Napa Valley)

Restaurants will be interested in this wine for its food-friendliness and price. All stainless-steel fermented, it's totally dry and very crisp in acidity, with complex lemongrass, gooseberry and vanilla flavors, and a pink grapefruit finish. It's the kind of wine that will go well with almost everything. Great wine, great value. **Best Buy.**

90 Points

Silverado 2005 Miller Ranch Vineyard Sauvignon Blanc (Napa Valley)

The wine is so high-toned in wildflowers you might think it was Alsatian, maybe Pinot Gris, a suspicion the high acidity also supports. But it's Sauvignon Blanc, with a rich core of yellow citrus fruit and papaya and an elegant minerality. This is a classy white wine at a good price.

88 Points

Clos Pegase 2002 Palisades Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley)

One of the later-released Cabs from the excellent '02 vintage, this 100% cabernet bottling, which comes from the winery's vineyard near Calistoga, is ultraripe, yet firm and balanced. It's showing beautifully now, with its wealth of blackberry, cherry, mushu sauce and coca flavors, but has the inherent balance for moderate, and possibly longterm, aging. **Cellar Selection.**

93 Points

Spottswoode 2003 cabernet Sauvignon (St. Helena)

A sturdy young Cabernet showing great harmony and class. It's fresh in ripe tannins, very poised and balanced, with a great depth of cedary blackberry fruit. This is really classic Napa Cabernet, so elegant, and a great food wine.

92 Points

Honig 2004 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley)

Balanced and elegant, this is the kind of Cabernet you can drink with food where the food, not the wine, takes center stage. It's dry and richly tannic, with complex but never overripe blackberry, cassis, coffee and oak flavors, and the finish is long and satisfying.

89 Points

Etude 2003 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley)

A little of the pace of previous vintages, although it shows that Soter elegance and Napa pedigree. It's tremendously concentrated in black currant and cherry fruit, almost with the super intensity of a wine reduction sauce, and you'll also find significant new French oak. A blend of major township communes along Highway 29, it's a beautifully lush Cab, but doesn't seem like an ager.

87 Points

Pavilion 2004 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley)

This is an awfully good price for such a nice Cabernet. It's well-structured and ripe, with a good acid-tannin balance and forward blackberry and cherry flavors. You'll be surprised at how much elegance there is.

86 Points

W.H. Smith 2005 Maritime Vineyard Pinot Noir (Sonoma Coast)

The first thoughts on this wine are how young it is, and how much potential it shows. The immaturity lies in the primary fruit, acidic character, like a big gulp of fruit cola. But the wine's awesome future is in its vast complexity and balance, and the way it dominates the palate and lasts and lasts. A blend of several vineyards, it's high in acidity, with massive cherry, pomegranate, rhubarb preserve, licorice, earthy mushroom and cedar flavors. So balanced and dry, so elegant and powerful, so silky and complex, it is quite simply a very great Pinot Noir, and an early indication that the vintage on the far Sonoma Coast may be the greatest ever. Tasted twice. **Editors' Choice.**

98 Points

Siduri 2005 Ewald Vineyard Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley)

This is one of the first important 2005 Russian River Pinots to hit the market, and it's an exciting hint to this eagerly awaited vintage. It was a cool, long hangtime year, and this wine is amazingly rich and deep in chocolatey cherry, black raspberry and cola flavors. For all that, this wine is dry, supple and delicately tannic, and seems to have a fine future.

92 Points

Clos Pegase 2005 Mitsuko's Vineyard Pinot Noir (Carneros)

Pinots from this vineyard have been variable, but the '05 is one of the best in years. The long, cool vintage yielded exceptionally ripe grapes, rich in cherries, pomegranates, cola and root beer flavor, yet the wine maintains a delicately dry, crisp silkiness. With quite a bit of new oak, this is a delicious Pinot best enjoyed in the next few years.

91 Points

Siduri 2005 Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley)

A little simple, but pleasant and elegant, with a delicately silky body and cherry cola, wintergreen, vanilla and oaky flavors. Not going anywhere, so drink up.

86 Points