



Donnafugata 2006 Ben Rye (Passito di Pantelleria)

The amber-colored wine is vibrant, brilliant and its purity of aromas is outstanding. Dried figs, apricot, honey, almond and fragrant herbs are delivered in thick, generous layers. Tingly acidity cleans the palate and powers a long, delectable finish.

95 Points

Frog's Leap 2004 Rutherford (Rutherford)

A beautiful young Rutherford Cabernet, showing the dusty elegance and complexity of a top estate. There's a rich herbality to the cherry, cassis and blackberry fruit, suggesting fresh green chervil, sage and thyme. Oak adds harmonious notes of vanilla, cedar and char. The tannins are thick and juvenile, but very finely ground. (Cellar Selection)

94 Points

Etude 2005 Deer Camp Pinot Noir (Carneros)

This is one for the cellar. Dry and savory, it shows powerfully ripe blackberry, cherry, cassis and coffee flavors that have been well oaked, and the silky, elegant texture of Pinot Noir. But there's a youthful tightness that withholds the wine's tender heart. (Cellar Selection)

96 Points

Etude 2005 Temblor Pinot Noir (Carneros)

This shows not only classic Carneros quality, but something exotic. Dry and complex, the wine has cherry, cassis, raspberry and new oak flavors, with good acidity. That extra something is a feral, earthy quality, suggesting olive tapenade, sweet leather, tobacco and mushrooms that has got to come from terroir. Youthfully great now. (Cellar Selection)

95 Points

Ponzi 2005 Reserve Pinot Noir (Willamette Valley)

Ponzi's reserve shows plenty of well-defined muscle and sinew, with firm and slightly chewy flavors of red berry, cranberry and spicy red apple. The tannins are relatively smooth and ripe, and the flavors have a pleasing resonance as they weave through the finish. This wine has the structure and balance to reward some years. (Cellar Selection)

91 Points

Dona Paula 2006 los Cardos Syrah (Lujan de Cuyo)

Mildly smoky and toasty aromas lead to a lightly oaked palate that's largely defined by black cherry and some rich berry syrup. It's a full, colorful syrah with a chunky mouthfeel and a satisfying but short finish. (Best Buy)

86 Points

Gainey 2006 Sauvignon Blanc (Santa Ynez Valley)

Even at \$20, it would be a great value for its crisp dryness, elegance, and subtle, complex flavors of citrus fruits, figs, melons, minerals and subtle oak flavors. With alcohol under 13%, it is totally dry, like a fine Lorie. At this price, it's an unbelievable bargain. (Best Buy)

91 Points

Pavilion 2006 Chardonnay (Napa Valley)

Pavilion has a perfect record with Chardonnay, four vintages in a row with a consistent score. The '06 like its predecessors is ripe and satisfying, with good varietal character. The peach and pineapple flavors have creamy, smoky nuances. (Best Buy)

86 Points

Jim Barry 2005 First Eleven Cabernet Sauvignon (Coonawarra)

The First Eleven boasts a kaleidoscopic range of berry fruit, accented by mint and darker notes of coffee, cocoa and cola. It's full-bodied and dense on the palate without being heavy, and finishes long, with impressive intensity and dusty tannins.

92 Points

Corison 2003 Kronos Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley)

It's so dry, balanced and complex, yet so tannicly tough now, that it demands a good 6 years at a minimum. The heart of blackberries and red currants is opulently rich, with overtones of cedar, pencil lead, red licorice and sweet dried herbs.

95 Points

Corison 2004 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley)

Cathy Corison makes her Cabs less ripe than many others, so the alcohol is lower and the acids and tannins are harder and drier. That's in youth. But such is the depth of cherry, blackberry, cassis, cedar and mineral flavors and overall balance that this complex young wine.

92 Points

Hendry 2004 Block 28 Zinfandel (Napa Valley)

Celebrates its lusty volume proudly as a big, gusty Zinfandel that makes no apology for high alcohol and extract. The flavors are huge, of ripe blackberries, loganberries, mulberries, red licorice, figs, black olives, Asian spices and oak, but despite all that, the wine finishes fully dry and balanced.

92 Points

JC Cellars 2005 Arrowhead Mountain Vineyard Zinfandel (Sonoma Valley)

Very rich and juvenile now, with exotic cherry, blackberry, gingerbread, tangerine, herb tea, vanilla oak and spice flavors, this Zin has a thick, tannic intensity that needs time to mature.

92 Points

Zaca Mesa 2004 Black Bear Block Syrah (Santa Ynez Valley)

The wine is certainly dense and layered, showing waves of blackberries and cherries, sweet leather and Asian spice, olive tapenade and beef carpaccio, and sweet, smoky new oak. It's extremely complex, and should develop in the cellar, although not for a long time.

93 Points