



Etude 2005 Deer Camp Pinot Noir (Carneros)

Dry and savory, it shows powerfully ripe blackberry, cherry, cassis and coffee flavors that have been well oaked, and the silky, elegant texture of the Pinot Noir. But there's youthful tightness that withholds the wine's tender heart. (Cellar Selection and Top-Rated 2005 California Pinot Noir)

96 Points

Novy Cellars 2005 Syrah (Santa Lucia Highlands)

Dark and Racy, with a Northern Rhone-style aroma of black pepper, cedar and black currants, but there's nothing Rhone-like about the flavor. It's distinctly California, with soft, sweetly ripe tannins bursting with blackberry jam, black currants, anise, vanilla and sweet oak flavors. The wine is fully dry. Absolutely first-rate Syrah. (Editor's Choice)

95 Points

Quinta do Vesuvio 2004 Vintage Port

A powerhouse of a wine that goes from densely rich to massive without a pause. The ripe fruit, the dark, heavy tannins, the black plum and fig flavors, all come from the terroir of this great vineyard. (Editor's Choice)

94 Points

Shafer 2005 Merlot (Napa Valley)

Shafer's Cabernet is so dominant, it's sometimes forgotten how good their Merlot can be. The wines are dependably dry, rich and balanced, as the excellent '05 demonstrates. It's soft and drinkable now, but rich and sweet in tannins that frame cherry, currant, cola, licorice, and vanilla flavors.

91 Points

Escarpment 2006 Pinot Noir (Martinborough)

Full-bodied, broad-shouldered style, with softer tannins than the 2005. It's packed with dark, earthy fruit: cola, mocha and plum notes form the core, enveloped in plush, dusty tannins.

89 Points

Catalina Sounds 2006 Pinot Noir (Neilson)

A pretty, pure Pinot, with lovely strawberry and cherry flavors backed by just hints of mushroom, tree bark and dried spices. It's light-to-medium-bodied, with a silky, elegant finish. Fairly priced for the quality.

87 Points

Ernie Els 2004 Limited Release (Stellenbosch)

A subdued, classic spice nose leads this impressive Bordeaux blend. The wine is structured but soft, vibrant but restrained-in short, an exceptional balance of leathery spice, plum and blackberry juiciness and delicate minerality. Very pretty but with a backbone. (Editor's Choice)

94 Points

Fairview 2005 Shiraz (Costal Region)

A nose of deep spice and balanced flavors of cherry and blackberry give this an appealing, approachable character. Unfolds smoothly and sleekly on the palate, and finishes with finesse.

87 Points

Neil Ellis 2006 Vineyard Selection Sauvignon Blanc (Jonkershoek Valley)

This Sauvignon Blanc has moxy and elegance wrapped into one. Intense ripe fruit and lemon in the nose and on the palate give the wine a bold character, but good minerality adds pretty restraint to the final product. An assertive and exciting wine.

90 Points

Faiveley 2005 Clos des Cortons (Corton)

This wine towers up, a strong edifice of tannins and bug, black fruits. It has all the right elements coming into place, along with weight and some elegance. (Cellar Selection)

95 Points

Faiveley 2005 Nutis-St.-Georges

The dryness is blackberry tannins; the wood is kept in check. Full, concentrated, a powerful wine.

90 Points

Faiveley 2005 La Framboisiere (Mercury)

The wine is named after a raspberry plantation, and that's what it tastes like. Small wild fruit, with their extra taste of ripe flesh, are in the glass along with delicious acidity. The tannins and the wood are all at the service of the fruit.

91 Points

Faiveley 2005 Domaine de la Criox Jacquet (Mercury)

This has plenty of very ripe fruits, but at the same time the tannins push through, firm and dry, and, at this young stage, tough.

90 Points

Faiveley 2005 Clos des Myglands Premier Cru (Mercury)

This wine is dominated by its dry tannins, which ride over the less exuberant fruit. Toast shows through, giving spice. Only the finish is the juicy fruit given a chance.

89 Points

Faiveley 2005 Les Mauvarenes (Mercury)

Dark and tough, this shows considerable wood at this early stage. It is tough and tannic when young, with a dry core. But I also taste red fruits, fresh acidity and a lively, fresh aftertaste.

89 Points

Pierre Morey 2005 Monthelie

On the earthy, rustic side of Pinot Noir, this shows firm tannins and fresh fruit. The structure is dry and taut, the berry flavors floating over this intense base. Then some ripeness shows, and perfumed and smoky bacon flavors.

88 Points

Spottswode 2004 Estate Cabernet Sauvignon (St. Helena)

The '04 Spottswode shows the enormous ripeness of the vintage, with lush currant, blackberry jam, chocolate-covered cherry candy and spice flavors, plus an earthier note of sweet green olive tapenade. For all that voluptuous flavor, the wine maintains great structure. Very good now.

92 Points

Novy Cellars 2005 Rosella's Vineyard Syrah (Santa Lucia Highlands)

It's pretty tannic now, locking down the palate. But what fruit! Enormous in blackberries, currants and cola, with an undertow of bitter chocolate, pepper and black olive tapenade.

92 Points

Novy Cellars 2005 Christensen Family Vineyard Syrah (Russian River Valley)

A very rich Syrah, packed with pepper, blackberries, currants, cherries, cola and licorice, and wrapped into the smoothest tannins you can imagine.

88 Points

Novy Cellars 2005 Syrah (Sonoma County)

With a rich, velvety texture and smooth, ripe tannins, the wine features oak-influenced flavors of blackberries, cherries raspberries and milk chocolate.

88 Points

Shafer 2004 Relentless (Napa Valley)

This wine shows the huge power and balance of the Shafer's Cabernet, with a different flavor profile. It's soft and gentle but complex in ripe tannins, with blackberry, cherry, cassis, cola, red licorice, sweet tobacco and rich Asian spice flavors.

92 Points

Spottswode 2006 Sauvignon Blanc (Napa-Sonoma)

A lush, crisp, eminently drinkable Sauvignon. Meyer lemon, pineapple, white peach, tangerine, spicy green melon and fig flavors are enriched with smoky, creamy oak.

90 Points

Ledaig 10 Year Old Isle of Mull Single Malt Whisky Tobermory Distillery (Scotland; IBC)

I love the intensely malty and enticingly peaty opening aroma that emits pungent notes of filled ashtray, soot, sea breeze and kippers. Palate entry is dry initially then rapidly turns off-dry and salty; at mid-palate, the taste profile explodes on the tongue in flavors of salted peanut, smoked fish, paraffin, light toffee and salted butter. (Best Buy)

90-95 Points