



Reviews

Calera 2003 Mt. Harlan Selleck Vineyard Pinot Noir

If you prize subtlety in pinot noir, you'll want this in your cellar. Selleck is one of the first vineyards Josh Jensen planted on Mt. Harlan in 1975; this pinot sits at about 1,200 feet on a steep, stony, south-facing slope. In 2003, it gave a wine that's herbal at first, but the vegetal tones quickly evaporate, leaving a delicate raspberry flavor. The evolution slows, taking hours to show off layers of minerals, a marine element, a dark, smoky length. It's more about savory earth tones than direct fruitiness, and has the inner strength to live and evolve for ten years or more.

94 Points

Calera 2003 Mt. Harlan Jensen Vineyard Pinot Noir

Rather than pushing for richness, Josh Jensen has created an elegant wine that needs hours of air to develop. The tannins are initially hard, the acidity youthful, the fresh cherry tones delicate but persistent. With air, it grows increasingly complex and vibrant, a bold statement from a limestone-rich vineyard where pinot noir has something significant to say. Most significant, perhaps, is that it shows a lot of potential to develop and, with decanting, is already a pleasure to drink.

93 Points

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

Dark, robust berry scents and deep pinot flavors from the core of this wine, fat and rich as a Russian River Valley pinot noir with more sun and brine. It's still young and a bit unformed, the cherry oak, autumnal flavors and vibrant fruit needing time to meld. Cellar it for several years, then serve with acorn-fed boar or wild duck.

91 Points

Flowers 2004 Sonoma Coast Camp Meeting Ridge Pinot Noir

From Flowers' earliest planting on the far coast, this is plusher than wines from the firm's younger vineyards a few miles closer to the sea. The flavors range from tart cherry to black cherry, the aromas from rose to lavender to orange oil. Though soft enough to enjoy now with filet mignon, it has the structure to improve significantly with age.

90 Points

Siduri 2005 Sonoma Mountain Van der Kamp Vineyard Pinot Noir

Sonoma Mountain may be better known for its cabernets, but Van der Kamp is often grown exceptional pinots, this one bold with an earthy gravitas. The first impression is alcohol, extract and oak, yet the wine is still clearly pinot noir despite its size and weight. With air, the elements integrate into red fruit and red spice; there's a fresh mushroom tone to the tannin to complement veal with porcinis.

90 Points

Flowers 2004 Sonoma Coast Andreen-Gale Cuvee Pinot Noir

The warm ripeness of this blend emphasizes plump red fruit and a velvet texture. Simple and closed, it may well improve with a year of bottle age.

88 Points**W.H. Smith 2005 Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir**

Scents of seaweed contrast the bitter cherry flavors of this pinot, needing time to meld. The bittersweet edge places it with roast duck with sour cherries.

88 Points**Stoller 2004 Willamette Valley Pinot Noir**

This Dundee Hills pinot is so generously fruity and seductive that you're liable to miss its complexity at first go. But beneath the black cherry scents are elements of mint, tree bark and red earth that ground all of the forward, dark strawberry fruit. For seared duck breast.

93 Points**Morey-Blanc 2004 Corton-Charlemagne Grand Cru**

Chamomile and jasmine scents run through this Corton, its structure smoky and rough. Hints of lime and green almond develop with air. The youthful hardness brings gunflint to mind, needing cellar time to develop more clarity in its terroir expression.

92 Points**Morey-Blanc 2004 Meursault**

Delicate scents of bee pollen and chamomile flowers give this wine a gentle expression when first poured. It follows through a silky texture toward mineral clarity, elements that stay with the wine as it expands with air, opening out to become potent and bold. Decant this if you open it now; it needs cellar time to reach its full potential. Great with Dungeness crab.

91 Points**Pierre Morey 2004 Meursault Les Tessons**

Oak toast dominates this wine at first, a charred character over the silky texture and minerality. Air turns it inside out, with orange citrus and anise melding into intense minerality, a wine full of character and promise, juicy, healthy and sweet. From a *lieu-dit* on limestone topped by the small, flinty stones that give it its name, this should be at its best five to six years from the vintage.

90 Points**Thierry et Pascale Matrot 2005 Meursault**

Scents of mineral lees augment the primary wood tones of this wine. It needs time for the plump texture and stony acidity to meld, and for the mineral notes to develop.

86 Points**J. Faiveley 2004 Macon-Prisse**

A clean, fresh Macon, this simple chardonnay offers warm fruit flavors and a touch of spicy acidity, for roast chicken.

87 Points

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Pierre Morey 2004 Bourgogne

Transparent rose in color, this is a fine raspberry essence of pinot noir. It's firm with sharp acidity that gives it a rustic, natural freshness. Buy this by the case for Sunday nights with roast chicken, or salmon steaks off the grill.

87 Points**Ch. De la Ragotiere 2005 Muscadet Sevre et Maine Sur Lie**

Ragotiere's white-labeled Muscadet is crisp and snappy under unusually ripe fruit. That ripeness is backed by briny, cucumber-like flavors not unlike a Kumamoto oyster, which would be a fitting companion for this wine.

89 Points**Vincent Delaporte 2005 Sancerre Chavignol**

The burst of ripe, fleshy citrus and nectarine fruit is carried by a firm streak of acidity and a spicy, saline undertone. It's fragrant and heady, its scents of orange peel and exotic spice making it fresh counterpoint to a Moroccan tagine.

90 Points**Le Macchiole 2001 Bolgheri Paleo Cabernet Franc**

Well-grown cabernet franc can produce a far more elegant wine than its richer cousins from Bordeaux. This 2001, grown on a mixture of clay, sand, limestone, chalk and rocks, provides a sustained chord of flavor, near perfect in its balance of chalky mineral tannins and waves of fruit. The layers of flavor grow more detailed with air, with red spices and green herbs adding to the spectrum of black and blue berries. There's abundant complexity to appreciate now with roast lamb, though the wine won't likely reach its full potential until eight or ten years from the vintage.

95 Points**Poggio Argentiera 2005 Morellino di Scansano Bellamarsilia**

A quaffable young wine with simple black cherry flavors, this is for casual nights around the grill.

86 Points**Boscarelli 2003 Vino Nobile di Montepulciano**

Impressively concentrated with the intensity of tannin that's a marker for 2003, this manages to be mouthwatering at the same time. The flavors are juicy and long, the black fruit fresh enough to sustain the austere tannins as the wine ages.

91 Points**Poggio Argentiera 2004 Toscana Finisterre**

A rich red for chocolate lovers, this 50/50 blend of Alicante and syrah shows a lot of oak extract at first, while there's plenty of equally dense fruit underneath that evolves with air. The tannin is expansive, with ferrous character that keeps the structure firm and allows the pretty fruit to show through. Probably best six to eight years from the vintage.

92 Points

Terrabianca 2003 Toscana Ceppate

Terrabianca pulls this cabernet sauvignon-merlot blend from vineyards in Chianti Classico as well as the Maremma. It has a casual power, its fruit intensity and extract carried with freshness. The structure is tight, the tannins a little youthfully astringent, but they allow the red fruit to show through. This is pretty and impressively long in its flavor, one of the better bets for aging among the Tuscan reds of the vintage.

92 Points

Terrabianca 2003 Toscana II Tesoro

Here's a merlot that turned the heat of 2003 into masses of fruit and volumes of tannin. It's international in style, with the espresso-roast scent and chocolate-rich tannins of new oak. Impressive, and easy to enjoy with prime rib.

90 Points

Leth 2005 Wagram-Donauland Langenreserve Wagramterrassen Riesling

The loess soils typical of the Wagram make themselves felt here with a deep, savory brothiness that underlines the orange and grapefruit pith notes. It's a big, broad-shouldered wine, firmly rooted in the earth.

88 Points

Leth 2005 Wagram-Donauland Lagenreserve Steinagrund Gruner Valtliner

Pithy pink grapefruit and apricot flavors are full-bodied, fragrant and bold. This may improve with time if the ripe fruit and high acid can mesh.

87 Points

Wimmer-Czerny 2005 Donauland Fumberg Gruner Veltliner

Racy and brisk, this shows Key lime and grapefruit notes backed by an herbal sweetness and a prominent saline undertone. It's smoky and refreshing; for barbecued shrimp.

87 Points

Schloss Gobelsburg 2005 Kamptal Steinsetz Gruner Veltliner

The loamy, pebbly Steinsetz vineyard always gives rich, full-bodied wines. The 2005 seamlessly combines its breadth with a deep, layered complexity of fruit, ranging from apricot and blood orange to more savory notes of white pepper, nut oils and shiso. It's supple and velvety, lingering in spicy fragrance.

93 Points

Hirsch 2005 Kamptal Gaisberg Riesling

Gaisberg lies on a bedrock of mica-schist, adjacent to Heiligenstein. Hirsch's 2005 shows a forceful mineral tension, salty and rigid under broad peach and citrus fruit. Seamless and refined, this races across the palate with energy and verve, showing the site's great breed in its subtly complex flavors and sleekly elegant build. It finishes with magnificent length and laserlike focus.

96 Points

Brundlmayer 2005 Kamptal Lagenloiser Steinmassel Riesling

The wines of Steinmassel often feel more overtly stony than those of Heiligenstein, and this is no exception: Sweet green apple and lime fruit feels almost incidental under the surge of pure mineral flavors. It doesn't have the depth or body of the Heiligenstein yet still feels complete, its crystalline aromas dancing through a long, fine finish.

93 Points

Schloss Gobelsburg 2005 Kamptal Gobelsburger Riesling

Like the gruner veltliner, Gobelsburger Riesling also outperformed its price in 2005. This feels like silk, with a full core of apricotty fragrance held in taut suspension by minerals and acidity. It's sleek and racy, clear and precise.

92 Points

Brandl 2005 Kamptal Heiligenstein Riesling

Racy and sleek, this combines tart apple and mandarin orange notes with a steely, chalky minerality. It's encased in a powerful grip of acidity, needing time to bring out more fruit flavor.

90 Points

Nigl 2005 Kremstal Kremser Freiheit Gruner Veltliner

This bursts with ripeness, its alluring array of white peach, guava and green bean aromas tethered by an earthy, visceral note of loess that grows tactile and savory on the finish.

90 Points

Nigl 2005 Kremstal Privat Riesling

Sourced from the Piri vineyard, Nigl's 2005 Privat is very picture of refinement, showing pure, sharply delineated flavors of green pear, guava and lime wrapped in a saline, stony package. The finish is crystalline in its focus, very long and intense. This continues to build in power for several days after being opened, and should develop in the cellar for at least another decade.

96 Points

K. Alphart 2005 Thermenregion Rodaumer Rotgipfler

The floral, citrusy fruit feels deep and lively, with a subtle complexity and clear, prominent flavors. There's some oak that needs to resolve, so decant this if you serve it now.

91 Points

Lagler 2005 Wachau Burgberg Gruner Veltliner Federspiel

The flavors of pear skin, lentil and rhubarb are focused and racy, acquiring more depth as this sits in the glass. It would be a good complement to cracked crab.

87 Points

Stuhlmuller Vineyards 2005 Alexander Valley Chardonnay

White chocolate flavors make this generous chardonnay a secret pleasure. Balanced in its vastness of fruit, it's easy to love. Serve it chilled with fatty crab.

90 Points



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Silverado 2005 Napa Valley Miller Ranch Sauvignon Blanc

The fruit flavors of this sauvignon are a touch exotic, like kumquat or loquat; then it finishes clean with lasting spice. Hints of chamomile and ginger work in harmony with the fruit; for red snapper steamed with ginger and scallions.

91 Points

Tablas Creek 2005 Paso Robles Cotes de Tablas Blanc

This blend of viognier, roussanne, marsanne and grenache blanc is consistently one of Tablas Creek's most impressive wines; in 2005, it's a sumptuous white a combination of mouthwatering richness with remarkably delicate and detailed aromas and flavors. The color is pale gold, mirrored in the scents of honey and the flavors of Chinese bitter melon. The aromas extend to dried flowers and pear as the wine expands with air, the austerity of the structure becoming a meatiness of fruit; balanced for braised veal shoulder.

94 Points

Tablas Creek 2004 Paso Robles Roussanne

The deep golden color predicts the rich, honeyed character of this wine. It has a lanolin richness, with sweet apple and white peach flavors rounded by alcohol and layered with drier tones of smoke and stony minerals. A bold wine for roasted game birds.

90 Points

Tablas Creek 2004 Paso Robles Grenache Blanc

Nutty at first, this gains more clarity with air, shifting from green spice toward white peach and pear. Alcohol lends warmth to the wine. Decant it for veal sausages.

89 Points

Spottswoode 2003 St. Helena Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon

This Spottswoode estate celebrates its 125th anniversary this year, and its latest release is a fitting tribute to the vineyard on the property first planted in 1916 by the Spotts family. The Novak family bought Spottswoode in 1972 and replanted the vines. Tony Soter made the first Spottswoode Cabernet in 1982; this current vintage was made by Rosemary Cakebread. Her '03 is lovely, a wine of tremendous richness packed with black currant flavor. It's smooth and lush, a sleek Napa Valley red, destined to be a classic.

94 Points

Frog's Leap 2003 Rutherford Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon

Austere at first, this evolves over the course of several days through an earthy mushroom savor toward luscious cabernet fruit and gold dust minerality. Probably best ten years from the vintage, with veal in a mushroom and cream sauce.

92 Points

Frog's Leap 2004 Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon

The earthiness of this cabernet makes it seem a little old-fashioned, at least in the context of contemporary Napa Valley reds. It tastes of the earth the way a truffle does, humid and ripe, with a chocolate edge. The structure is intriguing, the fruit recessed, needing prime rib to coax it out.

90 Points

Silverado 2003 Stags Leap District Napa Valley Solo Cabernet Sauvignon

Stags Leap District cabernet hits the texture receptors, and this one is the kind of textural pleasure that makes consideration of its fruit character moot. If you search, you might find candied violets, cocoa, a touch of black earthiness. The flavor detail may come with time, though the wine is easy to drink now, a soft lush red for filet mignon.

90 Points

Piedra Hill 2004 Howell Mountain Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon

From Bill Smith, the original owner of La Jota, and the current proprietor of W.H. Smith on the Sonoma Coast, this contrasts sweet, plush and plummy fruit with a zesty, orange-edged acidity. It's pumped up, a body-builder cabernet for those who like big reds.

87 Points

Tablas Creek 2004 Paso Robles Esprit de Beaucastel

Sleek on the surface, rustic at its core, this blend of mourvedre, syrah, Grenache and counoise has a warm, sandy texture to its tannin. The sweet black raspberry flavor is a little baked, while the tannins need time to evolve.

88 Points

WillaKenzie Estate 2005 Willamette Valley Pinot Blanc

Primary and grapey when first poured, this wine's fresh grapefruit and dark citrus flavors assure taut lines and a fresh, clean texture. Its lively acids contribute to a wonderfully brisk, long finish. For sole meuniere.

90 Points

Weinbach 2004 Alsace Cuvee Laurence Gewueztaminer

From clay and limestone soils near Altenbourg, this spicy, with sleek aromas of ginger, litchi and mangosteen. It's sharply defined and relatively dry, with a silky, elegant texture.

93 Points

Marc Kreydenweiss 2004 Alsace Grand Cru Wiebelsberg Riesling

This is very dry, showing fresh flavors of apple, green papaya and orange citrus. There's a supple, almost creamy texture typical of sandstone soils, shaped by a firm acidity that pushes the flavors with tightly controlled length and depth.

90 Points

Farnese Italy Edizione Cinque Autoctoni

A blend of local grapes montepulciano, sangiovese, primitivo, negroamaro and malvasio nera from Puglia and Abruzzo, this is as smooth as silk and packed with plump blackberry fruit. It's simple and delicious, with spice and floral notes lingering in the end.

88 Points