

WHITES

2009 Chateau Roustan White

I LOVE Rhone-styled whites at "try me" prices. This example is mostly Roussanne (60%) and Viognier (20%) and bursts with flavor. Aromas of lime rise from the glass and lead to clean and fresh fruit flavors – ripe pears then creamy apples. The fruit is perfectly ripe and balanced with just enough acidity. The finish is crisp with tropical, mango & tangerine, flavors and good length.

2008 The Guardian Chardonnay

My devotion to Kenny Likitprakong & his wines (Folk Machine Pinot, Hobo Cab & Zinfandel & Banyan Gewurtz.) is becoming obscene. I'm thinking Jesse/ Tiger/Edwards/ Sanford-style rehab. Unfortunately another soul mate, I mean wine, has emerged – The Guardian Chard. This is what Calif. should aspire to: practically un-oaked with tropical aromas with smooth and mellow apple and pear fruit on the palate. The acidity deftly balances its inherently soft texture. The finish is slightly bright with light citrus notes and good length. A wonderfully structured and balanced wine!

2009 Lote 44 Pinot Grigio

Now that Argentina has conquered Malbec, I think Pinot Grigio is next. This is a terrific example of the varietal. Ripe pear aromas fill the glass and lead to smooth, clean, and pleasantly ripe apple fruit. There's plenty of acidity to balance this fruit-forward style of PG. Great wine + great price = Maximum enjoyment.

2008 Sean Minor Sauvignon Blanc

I like Sean's strategy – no winery, low overhead, great juice, talented winemaking, and good pricing. This Sonoma Sauvignon Blanc has a crisp aroma of light citrus flavors. It's clean on the palate with softer flavors of melons (no enamel peeling Kiwi flavors). The mid-palate is pleasantly round with light mineral notes. The finish shows good length and tropical fruit flavors.

2008 Boxhead White

Here's a perfect warm weather white from down under. Equal parts Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, & Semillon, it has crisp apple aromas before tropical fruit aromas take over. This blend is immediately enjoyable as bright, fresh, and clean citrus and melon flavors affront your senses. This white has great balance between fruit and acidity – lots of flavor yet it's not a fruit bomb. The finish shows apple and mineral flavors and good length. Great warm weather white!

2005 Moreau Chablis Vaillon

I'm on a big Chablis kick. I know it's not as famous or desirable as Chard from Beaune or Nuits, but I think it's a very tasty second. This example from the stellar 2005 vintage has a ripe apple aroma with hints of almond. This wine has a lovely mouthfeel that's soft and round with light lemon fruit flavors. It brightens up on the mid-palate with citrus and mineral notes. The finish is dry with a unique combination of citrus and tropical flavors. This is an elegant, multilayered Chard. P.S. Don't serve this one too cold or you'll mute these wonderful flavors.

2008 Adelsheim Pinot Blanc

It's nice to see more Alsatian varietals emerging from Oregon. This Pinot Blanc is simply gorgeous. It's 100% estate fruit from a 3 acre vineyard with pretty apple fruit aromas. It's very well balanced on the palate with tons of ripe, apple flavors that are tempered with just enough brightness and acidity. The finish is crisp, clean, and quite lengthy. This is a very well-made wine.

2008 Wallace Brook Pinot Gris

Finally – a high quality, Willamette Valley Pinot Gris that crushes just about any Italian Pinot Grigio at this price. It doesn't hurt that it's the 2nd label of Adelsheim. Aromas of almonds and melons emerge from the glass and lead to a weighty mouthfeel. This white is clean and slightly bright with apple and mineral flavors that turn to lemon on the mid-palate. The finish shows citrus and mineral flavors. Overall, a wonderfully enjoyable wine.

2009 The Accomplice Chardonnay

As much as Australia has been kicked to the curb lately, they still make great everyday drinking whites. This example has pineapple aromas with a hint of oak. It's clean with tropical fruit and mango flavors. It uses a judicious amount of oak with good acidity. This white has a great balance between fruit, oak, and acidity. Quite enjoyable.

REDS

2008 Tamari Reserve Malbec

This is an excellent example of a higher quality Malbec. Dark berry fruit aromas coupled with a touch of cocoa lead to pretty boysenberry flavors on the palate. The mid-palate has rich, darker, berry fruit and nice acidity. This wine shows good complexity and will taste even better as it aerates. The finish is quite lengthy with huckleberry and cocoa flavors. Nice wine.

**2007 L.A. Cetto Petite Sirah
Valle de Guadalupe, Baja California**

The two most popular beverages from Mexico are tequila and Corona – and now I've found a third, Cetto Petite Sirah! It has a wonderful aroma of fresh picked, dark berry fruit. It's rich and ripe on the palate with "blue" fruits – blueberry and blackberry – and hints of cocoa and violets. It has a heavier mouthfeel and very well-balanced acidity. The finish is lengthy with dark berry fruit and light spice notes. Great example of the varietal.

2008 Minor Carneros Pinot Noir

Negociants (no winery or land & buy their grapes on the open market), like Sean Minor, kick butt during recessions when supply is plentiful. This gem from the Napa side of Carneros shows bright cranberry and earth aromas. It has great varietal character (100% Pinot Noir from Pommard & Dijon clones) with ripe, raspberry fruit, good acidity, and a round mouthfeel. The finish shows good length and plenty of bright, red berry fruit and hints of spice.

2007 Sean Minor Napa Cabernet

Here's another great example from the stellar 2007 vintage. Aromas of black cherries and light herb notes lead to pleasantly bright, dried berry fruit on the palate. This wine has excellent structure with perfect amounts of fruit, acidity, and tannins. This wine will open with aeration and the flavors will deepen and darken. This finish has a solid fruit component of dark cherry fruit and good length. Great wine!

2008 Boxhead Cabernet

This is an excellent warm weather Cab. It has big aromas of cherry fruit with tiny, hints of bell pepper. This red has a great mouthfeel with GOBS of juicy, berry/cherry fruit that's perfectly ripe. There's enough acidity for balance and this wine is never cloying. Fruit-forward, yes. Overly ripe, no. This one has a high "consumability" factor, well done.

2006 Chateau Saint-Sulpice

Great everyday drinking Bordeaux. This one deftly straddles the "Old" and "New" Worlds. It's "Old World" with earth and cedar aromas and "New World" with a smooth mouthfeel and medium-ripe dried cherry fruit and light earth notes. It has good acid balance, too. Overall, this is a good everyday drinking Bordeaux with just enough "local" flavor.

Herb's Choices April/May 2010

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2007 Hook & Ladder Tillerman

I would classify this as an Italian Bordeaux – 51% Cabernet Sauvignon 24% Cabernet Franc, 15% Merlot, & 10% Sangiovese. Regardless of moniker, it works. It has a dark berry aroma with hints of bell pepper. It's quite smooth on the palate with an interesting fruit component. This blend has subdued flavors of freshly picked red berry fruit that isn't overwhelming. There's an inherent dryness in this wine making it a great partner with food. As it opens though, the fruit expands and the acidity diminishes. The finish shows nice concentration of black raspberry fruit with solid tannins and good length.

ADVENTUROUS

2007 Piccini Chianti DOCG 1.5L

I figured the Federal Government shouldn't be the only entity offering rebates to the populace. Drum roll please...while supplies last, you can purchase the equivalent of 2 bottles of Piccini Chianti for just slightly more than the price of one 750ml bottle. Socialism? Not really. Great deal? Absolutely, especially after reading my review...

I taste this Chianti practically every vintage and give it a "Herb's Choice" every time. Their consistency is quite remarkable. It has an outstanding fruit component – clean, soft cherry fruit – with just enough acidity (so you know it's an Italian red) for balance. Piccini is a perfect everyday red that over-delivers in quality and an excellent everyday choice.

Wine Enthusiast - 90 Points

2008 Alexandria Nicole Shepherds Mark White

"The Shepherds Mark is a Rhône blend of Roussanne, Marsanne and Viognier, sourced from the Destiny Ridge (estate) vineyard. Barrel fermented in neutral oak, it presents an inviting floral blossom nose, leading into a delicious mix of citrus, white peach, melon and light tropical fruits. It's rich but never tiring."

2008 Fontaleoni Vernaccia

Is your relationship with Pinot Grigio growing stale? If so, I'd like to introduce you to my good friend Vernaccia – everything you like about PG, but with some spark. This example has crisp aromas of light citrus fruits and hints of almonds. It has good weight on the palate with ripe apple flavors that evolve towards tropical fruits on the mid-palate. This wine has a pleasantly round texture, too. The finish has good length and more tropical flavors.

2006 Chateau De Brondeau

With most of my 2005's gone, I'm on the lookout for quality Bordeaux at reasonable prices. Enter Chateau Brondeau. This example has a cedar and cherry aroma that leads to surprisingly smooth flavors on the palate – slight earth notes combined with dried cherry fruit. This wine has pleasant brightness as well as a solid fruit component. It's a cleaner style with good flavor and concentration.

Emeri Pink Moscato

What can I say? I like this wine. I know, Pink (???) Moscato, but it's VERY enjoyable, almost addictively so. It's clean with lovely fresh, fruit cocktail flavors. This bubbly isn't too sweet and cloying and yet has hints of acidity for balance. It's low in alcohol and perfect for Atlanta's warm weather. Trust me and try one, I know you won't be disappointed. Better yet, take two. You'll save yourself a trip when the first bottle is gone.