

# Wine Spectator Insider

Marvin R. Shanken *Editor and Publisher*

A Members-Only, Weekly Publication

**THIS week's *Wine Spectator Insider* features outstanding wines from California, Italy and Washington. Tuscany takes top billing in this edition—James Suckling reviews 15 new Brunellos di Montalcino from the impressive 2004 vintage. A classic-rated Sangiovese leads the Hot Wines, on page 4.**

Also in this issue, James Laube covers outstanding Pinot Noirs, Cabernets and Chardonnays from California, including a 91-point full-bodied Edna Valley Chardonnay priced at just \$20. There's also a handful of exciting new California Zinfandels reviewed by Tim Fish. Finally, you'll find Harvey Steiman's newest tasting notes on Syrahs from Washington, most of them made in the state's very successful 2004 vintage.

## California

### SOJOURN

Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast Sangiacomo Vineyard 2007  
**92 points | \$48 | 470 cases made | Red**

Minty bay leaf and ripe, juicy wild berry fruit join together in this full-bodied effort, gaining richness and body and picking up a cola note. Ends with a long, persistent finish. Drink now through 2013.—*J.L.*

### ST. CLEMENT

Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley Oroppas 2006  
**92 points | \$55 | 5,072 cases made | Red**

Ultrarich and concentrated, delivering plush blackberry, currant, black cherry and spicy anise flavors that are pure, focused and full-bodied, with a long, persistent finish that ends with a supple texture. Best from 2011 through 2017.—*J.L.*

### VALDEZ

Zinfandel Rockpile Rockpile Road Vineyard 2006  
**92 points | \$38 | 642 cases made | Red**

Ripe, briary and full of personality. Offers aromas of dried sage and wild berry, with dense yet still supple huckleberry, cracked pepper and dried anise flavors that linger toward ripe but rustic tannins. Drink now through 2014.—*T.F.*

### ARMANINO

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley The Whitewing Amber Ridge 2007  
**91 points | \$49 | 200 cases made | Red**

Mixes savory herb, loamy earth, cola and dried currant and berry flavors in a tight, focused style. Full-bodied and intense without being heavy, ending with gripping, spice-laced tannins. Drink now through 2014.—*J.L.*

### ARMIDA

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Bacigalupi Vineyard 2007  
**91 points | \$39 | 220 cases made | Red**

Rich and savory, with fleshy, full-bodied soy-laced porcini, ripe berry, cola and herb notes, giving this a complex range of flavors. Finishes with supple tannins. Drink now through 2013.—*J.L.*

### DAVID ARTHUR

Chardonnay Napa Valley 2007  
**91 points | \$42 | 130 cases made | White**

Ripe and sweet-tasting, this full-bodied Chardonnay shows fresh, vibrant tangerine, fig and melon fruit, ending with an effusively fruity aftertaste. Drink now through 2012.—*J.L.*

## DUTCH BILL CREEK

Chardonnay Russian River Valley 2007  
**91 points | \$25 | 690 cases made | White**

Clean, pure, rich and full-bodied, with ripe peach, tangerine, nectarine and hints of wet stone. Intense, concentrated and full-bodied, this keeps its focus on pure ripe fruit. Drink now through 2012.—*J.L.*

## FRANK FAMILY

Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley 2005  
**91 points | \$45 | 11,170 cases made | Red**

Starts ripe and supple, with pure, ripe cherry, plum and blackberry fruit, then firms up, revealing chewy tannins. Full-bodied and well-balanced, with a complex finish. Best from 2010 through 2017.—*J.L.*

## HARTFORD FAMILY

Zinfandel Russian River Valley Highwire Vineyard 2007  
**91 points | \$55 | 300 cases made | Red**

Few Zinfandels are this focused and complete. Offers boysenberry, white pepper and loam aromas, with a structure that balances ripeness and complexity, showing flavors of wild berry, licorice and cinnamon. Drink now through 2014.—*T.F.*

## MARTINELLI

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Moonshine Ranch 2007  
**91 points | \$60 | 675 cases made | Red**

Richly fruity, with ripe plum, blackberry and black cherry fruit that's bold and fleshy, pushing ripeness to the max, yet remaining balanced. Full-bodied and mouthcoating, with a hint of alcohol. Drink now through 2012.—*J.L.*

## PAHLMAYER

Chardonnay Napa County Jayson 2007  
**91 points | \$45 | 1,940 cases made | White**

Leesy citrus, grapefruit and honeydew flavors are full-bodied, intense and concentrated, with a pleasant earthy edge that builds depth and complexity on the finish. Drink now through 2013.—*J.L.*

## ROESSLER

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Dutton Ranch 2007  
**91 points | \$42 | 171 cases made | Red**

Racy, with appealing berry, cola, tea and black cherry aromas that gain depth and concentration, revealing layers of complexity and ending with a tight, full-bodied finish. Drink now through 2012.—*J.L.*

## ROESSLER

Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast Griffin's Lair 2007  
**90 points | \$45 | 251 cases made | Red**

Sleek and savory, with a mix of herb, dried currant and cranberry. Tight, full-bodied and focused, delivering a beam of flavors. The tannins tighten a bit on the finish. Drink now through 2012.—*J.L.*

## ROSENBLUM

Zinfandel Sonoma Valley Maggie's Reserve 2006  
**90 points | \$45 | 1,346 cases made | Red**

Intense yet sleek, showing wild berry, sage and licorice aromas, with focused boysenberry and pepper flavors that take on length toward zesty tannins. Drink now through 2013.—*T.F.*

## SBRAGIA FAMILY

Zinfandel Dry Creek Valley La Promessa 2006  
**90 points | \$32 | 791 cases made | Red**

Ripe yet deftly balanced, with bright raspberry and white pepper aromas leading to lively cherry and anise flavors that finish with sleek tannins. Drink now through 2013.—*T.F.*

# Italy

## Tuscany

### Brunello di Montalcino

#### CIACCI PICCOLOMINI D'ARAGONA

Brunello di Montalcino Vigna di Pianrosso 2004  
**92 points | \$67 | 1,100 cases imported | Red**

Very fruity aromas of raspberry, plum and fresh flowers lead to a full-bodied palate, with round, soft tannins and lots of juicy, delicious fruit. Very attractive. Hard not to drink it now. Best from 2010 through 2015.—*J.S.*

#### CONTI COSTANTI

Brunello di Montalcino 2004  
**92 points | \$90 | 750 cases imported | Red**

Rich and subtle, delivering plum, berry and ripe strawberry character, with dried mushroom undertones. Full, with a ripe, velvety tannin backbone and beautiful fruit. Features coffee and berries on the finish, with bright acidity. Best after 2011.—*J.S.*

#### LA GERLA

Brunello di Montalcino Vigna gli Angeli 2004  
**92 points | \$85 | 110 cases imported | Red**

Displays lots of ripe sweet fruit, verging on jam, with plum, raspberry and cherry on the nose. Full-bodied, with soft, round tannins and delicious fruit. Long and round-textured. Very good now, but better in a year or two. Best after 2010.—*J.S.*

#### PIEVE SANTA RESTITUTA

Brunello di Montalcino Rennina 2004  
**92 points | \$155 | 500 cases imported | Red**

Aromas of blackberry and dried mushroom follow through to a full body, with silky, refined tannins and a long aftertaste of bright fruit. Juicy and delicious on the intense finish. This has beautiful intensity. Best from 2010 through 2016.—*J.S.*

#### LA PIEVE

Brunello di Montalcino 2004  
**92 points | \$59 | 45 cases imported | Red**

Offers complex aromas and flavors of plum jam, olive, flowers and mineral. Full-bodied, with well-integrated tannins and a long, intense finish that features lots of fruit. Juicy and delicious already. Why wait? Best from 2009 through 2012.—*J.S.*

## POGGIARELLINO

Brunello di Montalcino 2004

**91 points | \$45 | 400 cases imported | Red**

Aromas of mushroom, berries and dried flowers, with a hint of cereal, follow through to a full body, with sweet and ripe fruit and lots of toasty oak. But this is pretty and fruity. An excellent value. Best from 2010 through 2015.—*J.S.*

## CAPRILI

Brunello di Montalcino 2004

**90 points | \$50 | 1,200 cases imported | Red**

Aromas of blackberry, with hints of chocolate and orange peel, lead to a full body, with tight tannins, bright acidity, a silky texture and a clean finish. Just starting to be ready. Best after 2010.—*J.S.*

## TENUTA LA FUGA

Brunello di Montalcino 2004

**90 points | \$65 | 3,000 cases made | Red**

Shows freshly sliced plum on the nose, with hints of mushroom and wood. Full-bodied, with firm tannins and a fruity berry aftertaste. A little tight still, but with balanced and refined tannins. Needs time. Best from 2011 through 2015.—*J.S.*

## LIVIO INNOCENTI

Brunello di Montalcino 2004

**90 points | \$50 | 100 cases imported | Red**

This has a clean nose, with subtle notes of plum jam, violet and cedar. Full-bodied, with a silky, caressing texture and a hint of chocolate coming through. The finish is long, with well-defined fruit and chocolaty oak. Best after 2010.—*J.S.*

## MASTROJANNI

Brunello di Montalcino 2004

**90 points | \$60 | 415 cases imported | Red**

Juicy and rich, showing plum, coffee and berries, with a hint of mushroom. Full, yet racy and fresh, with chewy tannins and a long finish. A little bottle age will bring this around beautifully. Best from 2010 through 2016.—*J.S.*

## RENDOLA

Brunello di Montalcino 2004

**90 points | \$45 | 9,000 cases imported | Red**

Shows floral and plum aromas, with freshly cut wood. Full-bodied, showing bright cherry and plum character on the palate, with a hint of vanilla. Silky and delicious. Best after 2010.—*J.S.*

## RENIERI

Brunello di Montalcino 2004

**90 points | \$100 | 1,000 cases imported | Red**

Polished and racy, with plum, cherry, citrus fruit and fresh oak. Full and chewy, yet refined and very pretty. Best after 2010.—*J.S.*

## VASCO SASSETTI

Brunello di Montalcino 2004

**90 points | \$50 | 2,400 cases imported | Red**

Shows flowers, sliced plum and strawberry on the nose. Full, with a silky texture and very well-integrated, refined tannins that follow through to the focused, fruity finish. Drink now through 2015.—*J.S.*

# Washington

## BUNNELL

Syrah Wahluke Slope Clifton Hill Vineyard 2006

**92 points | \$42 | 220 cases made | Red**

Smooth and round, with mineral, apricot and spice overtones to the blackberry and plum flavors, lingering on the polished finish. Drink now through 2014.—*H.S.*

## NICHOLAS COLE

Syrah Walla Walla Valley Dauphiné 2006

**92 points | \$49 | 600 cases made | Red**

Rich and mouthcoating, not big or bulky but impressively generous and layered, with dark plum, cherry, tobacco and bacon flavors that persist enticingly on the long, expressive finish. Best from 2011 through 2016.—*H.S.*

## SEQUEL

Syrah Columbia Valley 2006

**92 points | \$55 | 2,012 cases made | Red**

Bright and generous, delivering a lively mouthful of blackberry and plum fruit, shaded with hints of pepper and spice, lingering nicely on the beautifully focused finish. This has depth without excess weight, along with the goods to develop long term in the cellar. Drink now through 2014.—*H.S.*

## BUNNELL

Syrah Horse Heaven Hills 2006

**91 points | \$38 | 370 cases made | Red**

Crisp and focused, with a nice bead of dark plum and blueberry flavors shooting through the middle, shaded with hints of roasted meat and dried tomato. The finish sails on nicely. Drink now through 2016.—*H.S.*

## BUNNELL

Syrah Yakima Valley Boushey-McPherson Vineyard 2006

**91 points | \$42 | 250 cases made | Red**

Smooth and round, with a meaty, mineral component to the ripe blueberry and dark plum flavors that linger easily on the well-formed finish. Drink now through 2014.—*H.S.*

## COEUR D'ALENE

Opulence Washington 2006

**91 points | \$40 | 661 cases made | Red**

Bright and jazzy, almost feels raw, with juicy blackberry and lime flavors on a raucous frame, persisting on the finish. Needs time to settle. Syrah and Viognier. Best from 2012 through 2016.—*H.S.*

# HOT WINES

These are the most exciting discoveries from our editors' most recent tastings, published exclusively in *Wine Spectator Insider*. They are high-scoring, low-production wines from around the world that may be difficult to find, but are worth seeking out.

## PIEVE SANTA RESTITUTA

Brunello di Montalcino Sugarille 2004

**95 points | \$170 | 400 cases imported | Red**

Shows aromas of citrus fruit, with raspberry and blackberry. Full-bodied, with a solid core of fruit and silky tannins. Very well-structured, with a hint of new wood on the finish. Long and balanced. Still needs time. The best wine ever from this estate. Best after 2011. *From Italy.—J.S.*

## MASTROJANNI

Brunello di Montalcino Schiena d'Asino 2004

**93 points | \$70 | 125 cases imported | Red**

Very beautiful and perfumed, with ripe strawberry and rose. Full, with superfine tannins and wonderful balance. Very long and refined. Best from 2010 through 2015. *From Italy.—J.S.*

## LIVIO SASSETTI

Brunello di Montalcino Pertimali 2004

**93 points | \$75 | 1,800 cases made | Red**

Candied plum notes, with hints of flowers and mushroom, follow through to a full-bodied palate, with very soft, juicy tannins and lightly grilled meat, berry and fresh shiitake mushroom flavors. A decadent style. Best from 2010 through 2015. *From Italy.—J.S.*

## MOUNT EDEN

Chardonnay Edna Valley Wolff Vineyard 2007

**91 points | \$20 | 5,588 cases made | White**

Ripe and floral, with fleshy peach, nectarine, melon and spice. Full-bodied, focused and elegant, with a long, persistent finish that emphasizes the ripe fruitiness. Drink now through 2012. *From California.—J.L.*

## WINE SPECTATOR'S TASTERS

### The Most Experienced Team of Wine Journalists in the World

*Wine Spectator's* tasting staff includes 14 people in four offices. They work together to review more than 18,000 wines each year, more than any other publication. Together, our seven senior tasters count more than 140 years of tasting experience.

We always taste wine blind in our offices in San Francisco, Napa, New York and Tuscany, and in the vineyard regions of Europe. This is your guarantee that our reviews are fair and objective, and that a wine's reputation or price does not influence its score. Each editor specializes in the wines of specific regions; their initials identify the taster of each wine reviewed. We score wines using the 100-point scale, explained below.

**James Laube** Senior editor, Napa

Joined *Wine Spectator* in 1983. Tasting beat: California

**Kim Marcus** Managing editor, New York

Joined *Wine Spectator* in 1988. Tasting beat: Austria, Greece, Portugal, southern France

**Thomas Matthews** Executive editor, New York

Joined *Wine Spectator* in 1988. Tasting beat: New York, Spain

**James Molesworth** Senior editor, New York

Joined *Wine Spectator* in 1997. Tasting beat: Argentina, Chile, Loire Valley, Rhône Valley, South Africa

**Bruce Sanderson** Tasting director, New York

Joined *Wine Spectator* in 1993. Tasting beat: Burgundy, Champagne, Germany

**Harvey Steiman** Editor at large, San Francisco

Joined *Wine Spectator* in 1983. Tasting beat: Australia, New Zealand, Oregon, Washington

**James Suckling** European bureau chief, Italy

Joined *Wine Spectator* in 1981. Tasting beat: Bordeaux, Italy, Port

Tasting staff:

**Jo Cooke** (Veneto),

**Tim Fish** (California),

**Alison Napjus** (Alsace),

**MaryAnn Worobiec** (California)

#### Wine Spectator's 100-Point Scale

95-100	Classic
90-94	Outstanding
85-89	Very good
80-84	Good
75-79	Mediocre
50-74	Not recommended