

Wine Spectator Insider

Marvin R. Shanken *Editor and Publisher*

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ELEVEN CLASSIC-RATED WINES in this week's *Wine Spectator Insider* show what skilled winemakers can do with Napa Cabernet, Brunello di Montalcino and Washington Syrah, among other styles.

Releases from the 2008 vintage of Napa Cabernet show promise so far, with Carte Blanche and Realm delivering particular successes. The 2006 Brunellos (as well as riservas from 2005 and 2004) continue to prove their power and complexity. And the Syrahs and red blends of Washington make their case for the state's fine wine industry; Cayuse, Reynvaan and Andrew Will are each represented with multiple bottlings here.

Turn to page 4 for our Hot Wines from all three regions.

CALIFORNIA

DANCING HARES

Napa Valley 2008

95 points | \$125 | 550 cases made | Red

Rich and powerful, yet graceful and detailed, exhibiting tiers of complex flavors built around rich blackberry, blueberry and wild berry flavors, with roasted herb, tar and smoke touches. Full-bodied and supple in texture, ending with a long, pure, persistent finish. Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Merlot and Petit Verdot. Best from 2012 through 2023.—*J.L.*

MAYBACH

Cabernet Sauvignon Oakville

Materium Weitz Vineyard 2008

94 points | \$125 | 425 cases made | Red

Firm, dense, tannic and chewy, but with a wealth of flavors and nuances, showing black licorice, graphite, blueberry, charcoal, currant and spice character. Full-bodied and very tight in a good way, as the flavors are slow to unravel. Best from 2013 through 2021.—*J.L.*

REALM

The Tempest Napa Valley 2008

94 points | \$75 | 300 cases made | Red

Polished and complex, with rich aromas of red currant, spicy cinnamon with tomato leaf. Flavors are layered and beautifully structured, with plum, olive and loamy clay, leading to firm but ripe tannins. Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot. Drink now through 2017.—*T.F.*

DANCING HARES

Napa Valley 2007

93 points | \$125 | 572 cases made | Red

Very dense and concentrated, complex and chunky, with a range of dried currant, blackberry, loamy earth, tar, sage and mineral flavors. Full-bodied, yet clamping down on the finish. Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Merlot and Petit Verdot. Best from 2013 through 2022.—*J.L.*

BOYANCI

Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley InSpire 2008

92 points | \$60 | 1,350 cases made | Red

Tightly wound, with firm spice, cedar, dried currant and blackberry fruit. Full-bodied and focused, ending with a complex finish that echoes creosote, black tea and subtle berry notes. Best from 2012 through 2021.—*J.L.*

HOURLASS

Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley 2008

92 points | \$155 | 700 cases made | Red

Fragrant floral, black licorice and fresh earth flavors are full bodied, with touches of bay leaf. Delicate at first, yet builds intensity and depth, ending with a long, full finish, where the tannins turn chewy. Best from 2012 through 2020.—*J.L.*

REALM

Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley Beckstoffer
Dr. Crane Vineyard 2008
92 points | \$125 | 145 cases made | Red

Firm and intense, yet gushing with rich blueberry, blackberry, plum and cassis flavors. Shows great density and concentration, along with a supple lining in texture, finishing with hot stone and pebble notes and a burst of fruit. Best from 2013 through 2022.—*J.L.*

ITALY

Brunello di Montalcino

VILLA I CIPRESSI

Brunello di Montalcino Zebras 2004
95 points | \$75 | 50 cases imported | Red

Dense and powerful, featuring black cherry, blackberry and raspberry notes. There's a serious base of tannins as this cruises to a lingering aftertaste of berry and mineral. Just beginning to show some development, with fine potential ahead. Best from 2013 through 2026.—*B.S.*

CASTIGLION DEL BOSCO

Brunello di Montalcino Campo del Drago 2006
93 points | \$75 | 400 cases imported | Red

Round and smooth, with cherry, vanilla, tobacco and mineral flavors, picking up more traditional character, with firm tannins and spice notes, on the finish. Balanced and long. Best from 2013 through 2026.—*B.S.*

DONATELLA CINELLI COLOMBINI

Brunello di Montalcino Riserva 2005
93 points | \$65 | 175 cases imported | Red

This smooth red is laced with black cherry and plum, yet with serious tannins lurking in the background. They emerge on the finish, along with touches of licorice and spice. Turns dense and chewy in texture. Best from 2013 through 2026.—*B.S.*

CASTIGLION DEL BOSCO

Brunello di Montalcino 2006
92 points | \$47 | 2,000 cases imported | Red

A deft use of oak rounds out this red, but also blunts the aromas a bit. Flavors of tobacco and plum, with a dash of vanilla, gather steam through the finish. Solid, if not very expressive right now. Best from 2012 through 2023.—*B.S.*

CASANUOVA DELLE CERBAIE

Brunello di Montalcino 2006
92 points | \$60 | 900 cases imported | Red

Supple and elegant, this Brunello displays its cherry, raspberry and cigar box flavors with intensity and harmony. Ends with refined tannins and a flourish of spice. Best from 2013 through 2025.—*B.S.*

LA GERLA

Brunello di Montalcino 2006
90 points | \$50 | 800 cases imported | Red

This floral- and cherry-scented red is elegant and supple, picking up a tobacco note on the palate. Moderate tannins emerge on the finish, where a spicy accent lingers. Best from 2013 through 2024.—*B.S.*

LISINI

Brunello di Montalcino 2006
90 points | \$70 | 2,500 cases made | Red

Rich and tasting of sweet cherry and berry fruit, this Brunello maintains a sense of grace. There's a supple texture up front, with grainy tannins ushering in the finish. Best from 2012 through 2023.—*B.S.*

WASHINGTON

ANDREW WILL

Sorella Horse Heaven Hills 2008
95 points | \$72 | 973 cases made | Red

Impressive for its intensity and elegance, packed with black cherry, cherry, plum and spice flavors, hinting at roasted red pepper and a tarry minerality as the finish glides smoothly over refined tannins. Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Merlot. Best from 2012 through 2020.—*H.S.*

CAYUSE

Syrah Walla Walla Valley Cailloux Vineyard 2008
95 points | \$70 | 785 cases made | Red

Polished, refined in structure and exuberant in flavor, bursting with cherry, smoke, paprika and tar character, finishing with a mineral edge. This has a steely balance behind the open texture, and the finish just rolls and rolls. Drink now through 2020.—*H.S.*

REYNVAAN

Syrah Walla Walla Valley The Contender 2008
95 points | \$60 | 300 cases made | Red

Ripe and expressive, offering a plush, soft mouthful of stony mineral, cola and sassafras flavors, with a welling up of black cherry and dark plum character as the finish persists impressively. Delivers depth, power and elegance. Drink now through 2020.—*H.S.*

CAYUSE

Syrah Walla Walla Valley En Chamberlin Vineyard 2008
94 points | \$70 | 296 cases made | Red

Dark and brooding, youthful and vibrant, with plum, currant, dried tomato and fresh leather flavors, picking up stony notes as the finish persists impressively. This has richness, minerality and depth. Drink now through 2018.—*H.S.*

AMAVI

Syrah Walla Walla Valley Les Collines Vineyard 2008
93 points | \$34 | 274 cases made | Red

Rich, ripe and opulent, not overly big, but expansive and expressive with its plum, currant and green olive flavors, picking up a mocha sweetness as the finish lingers beautifully. Drink now through 2018.—*H.S.*

ANDREW WILL

Champoux Vineyard Horse Heaven Hills 2008
93 points | \$60 | 969 cases made | Red

Powerful, focused and compelling for its layers of black cherry, mineral, animal and spice flavors, swirling together on the beautifully constructed finish. This has presence, depth and distinction, with miles to go. Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot. Best from 2013 through 2020.—*H.S.*

MARK RYAN

Dead Horse Red Mountain 2008
93 points | \$45 | 825 cases made | Red

Focused, generous and complex, not especially dense but brimming with cherry, cinnamon, clove and coffee flavors that persist unperturbed by fine tannins as the finish keeps rolling. Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Merlot, Petit Verdot and Malbec. Best from 2012 through 2020.—*H.S.*

REYNVAAN

Syrah Walla Walla Valley In The Rocks 2008
93 points | \$50 | 450 cases made | Red

Smooth and expressive, with layers of cherry, saffras, black olive and black pepper gliding over a polished frame, lingering enticingly. Offers depth and elegance, without excess weight. Drink now through 2016.—*H.S.*

ANDREW WILL

Ciel du Cheval Vineyard Red Mountain 2008
92 points | \$55 | 1,074 cases made | Red

This has a serious grip of tannins around a rumbling core of blackberry, licorice and pepper flavors, pushing through the firm finish. Needs time, but should eventually gain elegance. Merlot, Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon. Best from 2013 through 2020.—*H.S.*

FORT WALLA WALLA

Syrah Walla Walla Valley 2007
92 points | \$28 | 387 cases made | Red

Smooth and velvety, with a jazzy balance of acidity to the fresh blueberry and currant fruit, picking up pepper and spice notes as the finish lingers. Drink now through 2016.—*H.S.*

MARK RYAN

Water Witch Red Mountain 2008
92 points | \$45 | 325 cases made | Red

Big-boned, rich and flavorful, a mass of black pepper-accented blackberry, cherry and tar character that picks up the tempo on the long, raucous finish. Needs time to settle. Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Malbec. Best after 2013.—*H.S.*

SEVEN HILLS

Ciel du Cheval Vineyard Red Mountain 2008
92 points | \$32 | 649 cases made | Red

Polished, supple and expressive, offering a deftly balanced but rich mouthful of cherry, plum, paprika and white pepper flavors that flow seamlessly through the long, vivid finish. Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Petit Verdot and Cabernet Franc. Best from 2012 through 2020.—*H.S.*

ZANZIBAR

Sandra Aldercreek Vineyard Horse Heaven Hills 2008
92 points | \$40 | 900 cases made | Red

A distinctive minerality, reminiscent of warm rain on flagstones, runs through the flavor profile of this elegant, refined and powerful red. Dark berry and licorice notes also come through as the finish persists. Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah and Cabernet Franc. Drink now through 2016.—*H.S.*

MARK RYAN

Long Haul Red Mountain 2008
91 points | \$45 | 650 cases made | Red

Generous, focused and distinctive for its roasted red pepper and paprika nuances around a solid core of dark cherry and berry fruit, finishing firm and long. Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Petit Verdot and Malbec. Best from 2012 through 2018.—*H.S.*

ZANZIBAR

Syrah Columbia Valley Long Wide Life 2008
91 points | \$30 | 100 cases made | Red

Smooth and spicy, with an earthy, loamy tobacco cast to the ripe wild blueberry flavors, persisting into the lithe and balanced finish. Drink now through 2016.—*H.S.*

BRIAN CARTER

Solesce Columbia Valley 2006
90 points | \$50 | 530 cases made | Red

Firm in texture, this medium-weight wine offers a nice core of fresh blueberry and white pepper flavors, persisting nicely on the refined finish. Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Petit Verdot and Malbec. Best from 2012 through 2017.—*H.S.*

CAYUSE

Syrah Walla Walla Valley Armada Vineyard 2007
90 points | \$75 | 524 cases made | Red

Broad and spicy, this is distinctive for the burnt tobacco, cherry, blackberry and roasted red pepper flavors, finishing with depth and expression. Not a crowd-pleasing profile, but has plenty to offer. Best from 2012 through 2015.—*H.S.*

SPRING VALLEY

Syrah Walla Walla Valley Nina Lee 2008
90 points | \$50 | 400 cases made | Red

Velvety and rich, a powerful shot of cherry and spice flavors, with a hint of balsamic as the finish comes together smoothly. This has depth, and the tannins clamp down a bit on the finish. Best from 2013 through 2018.—*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.

CAMPOGIOVANNI

Brunello di Montalcino 2006

96 points | \$50 | 2,500 cases made | Red

Licorice, sweet spices, toast, smoke and sanguine aromas and flavors envelop a kernel of raspberry in this intense, extroverted red, which is complex, focused and structured, with an expansive finish. There's fine potential, but needs time. Best from 2014 through 2027. *From Italy.—B.S.*

CARTE BLANCHE

Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley 2008

96 points | \$125 | 300 cases made | Red

Fresh, plump and juicy, deep and concentrated, this full-bodied red delivers rich, lively plum, black cherry, blackberry, black licorice and spicy cedar flavors, with hints of tar. Shows both power and finesse, ending with loamy tannins. Best from 2013 through 2023. *From California.—J.L.*

CARTE BLANCHE

Proprietary Red Napa Valley 2008

96 points | \$95 | 125 cases made | Red

Very complex and Bordeaux-like in its range of flavors, weight and balance, marked by cedar and cigar box aromas, with notes of dried currant, wild flowers, black licorice and mineral. Full-bodied and gaining depth and lift on the finish, where the flavors sail on. Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Cabernet Franc. Best from 2012 through 2022. *From California.—J.L.*

CAYUSE

Syrah Walla Walla Valley En Cerise Vineyard 2008

96 points | \$70 | 355 cases made | Red

Rich and round, yet amazingly transparent as the cherry, mineral, tar and saffras flavors expand over the long, expressive palate. This has richness and depth balanced with vibrant acidity, finishing with intensity. Best from 2012 through 2020. *From Washington.—H.S.*

CASANUOVA DELLE CERBAIE

Brunello di Montalcino Riserva 2004

95 points | \$100 | 50 cases imported | Red

Absolutely delicious, this Brunello features sweet cherry, plum and floral aromas and flavors accented by spice and licorice. So seamless it's almost approachable now, with well-integrated tannins and freshness. Best from 2012 through 2025. *From Italy.—B.S.*

REYNVAAN

Syrah Walla Walla Valley The Unnamed Syrah 2008

95 points | \$45 | 500 cases made | Red

Brimming with rich berry flavors and scads of mineral notes, this sets up a marvelous tension between the two flavor poles and remains electric through the long, expressive finish. Shows depth, roundness and a distinctive profile on a polished frame. Drink now through 2020. *From Washington.—H.S.*

WINE SPECTATOR'S TASTERS

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Wine Spectator's tasting staff includes 12 people in two offices. They work together to review more than 18,000 wines each year, more than any other publication. Together, our six senior tasters count more than 140 years of tasting experience.

We always taste wine blind in our offices in Napa and New York. 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.

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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