

PINOT REUNION

The Pinot family of grape varieties—Blanc, Gris, Meunier and Noir—is one big happy clan. (Some might include Chardonnay in that group as well.) In Alsace, there's even a vintner, Jean-Michel Deiss, who ferments Pinot Noir, Pinot Blanc, Pinot Gris and Chardonnay together as one wine. The list below, however, sticks to varietal bottlings—all of them from the West Coast. Oregon's 2008 vintage was particularly successful for Pinot Noir, resulting in ripe, balanced wines.

ARTISANAL Pinot Noir Chehalem Mountains

Adams Vineyard 2008 (91, \$28) Licorice, blackberry, currant; agile

RAPTOR RIDGE Pinot Noir Willamette Valley

2008 (91, \$28) Refined; raspberry, cherry, peach, flowers

WITNESS TREE Pinot Noir Willamette Valley

2008 (91, \$28) Cherry, cassis, mineral; dense, focused, refined

ZEPALTAS Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast 2008

(91, \$29) Complex; spice, raspberry, black cherry, plum jam, loamy earth

BENTON-LANE Pinot Noir Willamette Valley

2008 (90, \$25) Light; red berry, flowers, cinnamon, nutmeg

ELK COVE Pinot Gris Willamette Valley 2009

(90, \$19) Pear, apple, lime, almond; fragrant

BENTON-LANE Pinot Gris Willamette Valley

2009 (89, \$17) Snappy; apple, peach, almond

BETHEL HEIGHTS Pinot Blanc Eola-Amity

Hills 2009 (89, \$16) Fragrant; peach, apple, flowers

WINTER REDS

I can't think of anything better for winter weather than a big, robust and hearty red. The three bottlings I've selected—a Sonoma Petite Sirah, a Zinfandel from the Sierra Foothills and an old-vine Aussie Shiraz—are about as companionable as you can get, featuring big flavors and warm personalities. They're perfect with winter fare such as soups, stews or braised meats, or simply for sipping by the fireplace.

VALDEZ FAMILY Petite Sirah

Russian River Valley Landy Vineyard 2007 (96, \$41)

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

Cassis, framboise, dark berry syrup, licorice, smoke, date, clove; dense, extracted

FIREBLOCK Shiraz Clare

Valley Old Vine 2006 (90, \$15) Dark, dense; red and black cherry, toast, spice,

crackles

FOUR VINES Zinfandel Amador County

Maverick 2008 (90, \$20) Raspberry, white pepper, huckleberry, licorice, sage; supple

FAR AND WIDE

This mixed selection of white and red wines leads off with two excellent Chardonnays that go long on quality and short on price. Oregon growers have steadily improved the grape there, and the state's elegant versions are beginning to demand serious attention. There's also a trio of Bordeaux reds that shows you don't have to pay big bucks for a classified growth to experience the wealth of the region's offerings. Finally, if you're looking for something different in a sparkling wine for the holiday season, try Moscato d'Asti from Italy. It's hard to beat its delicious, mouthwatering fruit flavors.

NEYERS Chardonnay Carneros 2009 (92,

\$29) Vibrant; apple, pear, spice

BRICK HOUSE Chardonnay Ribbon Ridge

2008 (91, \$24) Lime-accented green apple, Asian pear; bright, lively

COOPERS CREEK Sauvignon Blanc Marlborough

2009 (90, \$17) Juicy, elegant; pear, nectarine, citrus

CHÂTEAU LE GARDERA Bordeaux Supérieur

2008 (89, \$15) Tar, roasted herb, cigar smoke, currant, fig; chewy

NOBILO Sauvignon Blanc Marlborough

Regional Collection 2010

(89, \$14) Vibrant; citrus, apricot, fresh herb, flowers

CHÂTEAU DE RIBEBON

Bordeaux Supérieur 2009

(89, \$16) Raspberry ganache, roasted vanilla, graphite;

ripe, focused

CHÂTEAU ST.-MICHEL

Bordeaux Supérieur 2009

(89, \$18) Fresh; lavender, pastis, blackberry, hot stone

FRITZ Sauvignon Blanc

Russian River Valley 2009

(88, \$18) Lime, passion fruit, lemon, herbs; mouthwatering

ICARDI Moscato d'Asti

La Rosa Selvatica 2009 (88, \$17) Soft, creamy, balanced;

lychee, orange sorbet, graham cracker, lime

BODEGAS RAMÍREZ Rioja

Ramírez de la Piscina Selección Crianza 2007 (88, \$15)

Black cherry, blackberry, smoke, coffee, tobacco;

smooth, lively

YALUMBA Shiraz South

Australia Organic 2009

(88, \$16) Ripe blackberry, espresso; juicy, crisp

—Bruce Sanderson



MACROSTIE Chardonnay Sonoma Coast 2008 (92, \$25) **SMART BUY**

Citrus, green apple, spice, flowers, mineral; rich, elegant

SPECTATOR SELECTIONS

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

94 Bollinger

Brut Champagne Special Cuvée NV \$65

Rich and smoky, with hints of marzipan and fe seed accenting honeyed malt, bread baked apple and gingersnap flavors



COLLECTIBLE

97 Giuseppe

Rinaldi Barolo Cannubi S. Lorenzo-Ravera 2006 \$94

This Italian red shows sweet cherry, plum, licorice and salty mineral flavors, delivering fine sweetness and intensity.



SMART BUY

92 Chalone Chardonnay Chalone 2008 \$25

A rich California white, with complex melon, fig, tangerine and toast flavors. Full-bodied, yet light on its feet.

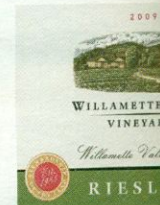


BEST VALUE

89 Willamette

Valley Riesling Willamette Valley 2009 \$12

This is soft and appealing, brimming with peach and floral character easily into the long, off-dry finish.



IN THIS ISSUE'S BUYING

You'll find **8 classic wines** and **275 outstanding wines** from reviews of more than **650 new** Tasting notes and scores for wines, along with nearly **225** **wines** reviewed since our last can be found at WineSpectator using the Wine Ratings service a members-only service