

Anthony Dias Blue Reviews



Every month I will be offering recommendations of currently available wines and spirits. These are my favorites from the more than 500 wines and 50 or so spirits I taste each month. The opinions are solely my own and in no way have any commercial considerations been brought to bear on my selections. I rate these products on the 100-point scale and nothing printed here will have scored less than 85.

Wines and spirits are rated as follows: 85-89 VERY GOOD; 90-94 OUTSTANDING; 95-100 CLASSIC. Although scores are a good guideline, these recommendations will more useful if you read the comments as well. - Anthony Dias Blue

WINE RECOMMENDATIONS

(Prices listed are suggested retail)

DOMESTIC



90 Ferrari Carano 2004 Fumé Blanc, Sonoma County (\$16)

Some herbs and lively acidity; peachy, lush and long.

SOUTHERN WINE & SPIRITS

90 Clos LaChance 2004 Estate Viognier, Central Coast (\$18)

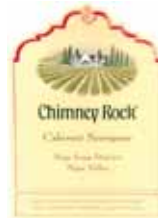
Crisp and citrusy with lively, racy acidity and fresh fruit; long, tangy and pure.

REGAL WINE CO.

89 Bergevin Lane Vineyards 2004 Viognier, Columbia Valley

(\$25) Dry and balanced with long, snappy flavors, fresh acidity and plump fruit.

SCHWERIN WINES 310-592-8028



93 Chimney Rock 2002 Cabernet Sauvignon, Stags Leap District (\$49)

Depth-bomb blackberry fruit and enticing acid structure; long, rich and complex with notes of herbs, spice and fresh berries.

SOUTHERN WINE & SPIRITS

92 Qupé 2002 Chardonnay, Bien Nacido Reserve, Block Eleven, Santa Maria Valley (\$27.50)

Creamy and juicy with lovely oak and tropical fruit; long, complex and luscious.

ANGELUS WINE AGENCY

94 Hartford 2003 Chardonnay, Seascape Vineyard, Sonoma Coast (\$50)

A favorite vineyard of owner Jess Jackson's family; bright and elegant, graceful and stylish with great breeding and finesse.

REGAL WINE
(CROWN DIVISION)

91 Dashe Cellars 2002 Zinfandel, Todd Brothers Vineyard, Alexander Valley (\$28)

Former Ridge winemaker Michael Dashe knows Zinfandel;



lovely plum and black raspberry fruit, packed with spice and finesse.

MADDALENA



91 Stuhlmüller 2001 Estate Cabernet Sauvignon, Alexander Valley (\$30) Suave texture with lush plum and bright acidity; long and lively, balanced and charming.

STRANGE WINES 310-457-0789

93 Woodenhead 2002 Pinot Noir, Russian River Valley (\$32) Bright and juicy, bursting with cherry and raspberry fruit; long, luscious and showing sweet notes of fruit and oak.

DIRECT DISTRIBUTION 707-887-2703

94 Cardinale 2002 Napa Valley (\$150) A stunning version of this Napa Bordelais blend (86% Cabernet Sauvignon, 14% Merlot); chock full of ripe berry fruit and juicy plum.

REGAL WINE (CROWN DIVISION)

IMPORTS

89 Wolf Blass 2004 Gold Label Riesling, Adelaide, Australia (\$14) If you think Wolf Blass is only about reds, think again: juicy and fresh with lovely complexity and fresh peach flavors.

AMERICAN WINE & SPIRITS

86 Gusto 2004 Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough, New Zealand (\$20)

Spicy and green with dense, grassy flavors; ripe, heavy and long.



EPIC WINES

89 Errazuriz 2002 Chardonnay, Wild Ferment, Casablanca Valley, Chile (\$19) Fermented on wild yeasts; rich, lush and juicy with complex flavors.

REGAL WINE

88 Domaine Jo Python 2003 Anjou "Les Pépinières," France (\$19) A creamy, lush Chenin Blanc from the Loire with sweet fruit and smooth texture; long, balanced and ripe.

VERITAS IMPORTS 310-205-3800

90 Louis Roederer NV Champagne Brut Premier, France (\$45) Rich and creamy with racy acidity and remarkable complexity.

WINE WAREHOUSE

88 Barone Ricasoli 2002 Campo Ceni, Toscana, Italy (\$20) First vintage of this charming new Sangiovese; lovely plum and berry fruit leads to a long, rich finish.

SOUTHERN WINE & SPIRITS

89 Dievole 2001 Vendemmia Chianti Classico, Italy (\$22) Flesh, earth and violets with juicy acidity and lovely, generous fruit; from one of Italian wine's most colorful vintners, Mario Schwenn.

EPIC WINES

92 Tikal 2003 Patriota, Mendoza, Argentina (\$25) A Bonarda-Malbec blend with loads of bright raspberry and plum flavors; long and stylish.

EPIC WINES



92 Vilafonté 2003 Series M, Paarl, South Africa (\$50) Zelma Long and Phil Freese run this exciting new South African project. Series M is a Merlot-driven blend with luscious plum, rich blackberry and plenty of grip.

EPIC WINES

93 Vilafonté 2003 Series C, Paarl, South Africa (\$70) Series C, a Cabernet-based blend, shows great depth, style and finesse; certainly the best wine to come from South Africa in the modern era.

EPIC WINES

WINE

BY THE GLASS & VALUE
RECOMMENDATIONS



87 Bonello d'Italia
2003 Pinot Grigio-Chardonnay delle Venezie, Italy (\$9)

A budget-watcher's label from Gabbiano; smooth and fresh with ripe fruit and racy acidity.

SOUTHERN WINE & SPIRITS

87 Firestone 2004 Gewurztraminer, Santa Ynez Valley (\$11) Fruity and clean with juicy peach and spice; long, balanced and fresh

YOUNG'S MARKET COMPANY

89 Jekel 2004 Wine-maker's Collection Riesling, Monterey (\$10) Pure juicy flavors with lively citrus acidity.

ESTATES GROUP

89 Jean-Luc Columbo 2003 Viognier La Violette, Vin de Pays d'Oc, France (\$13) Nice aromatics



lead to a palate bursting with fruit; a nice effort from one of the Midi's most adventuresome winemakers.

SOUTHERN WINE & SPIRITS



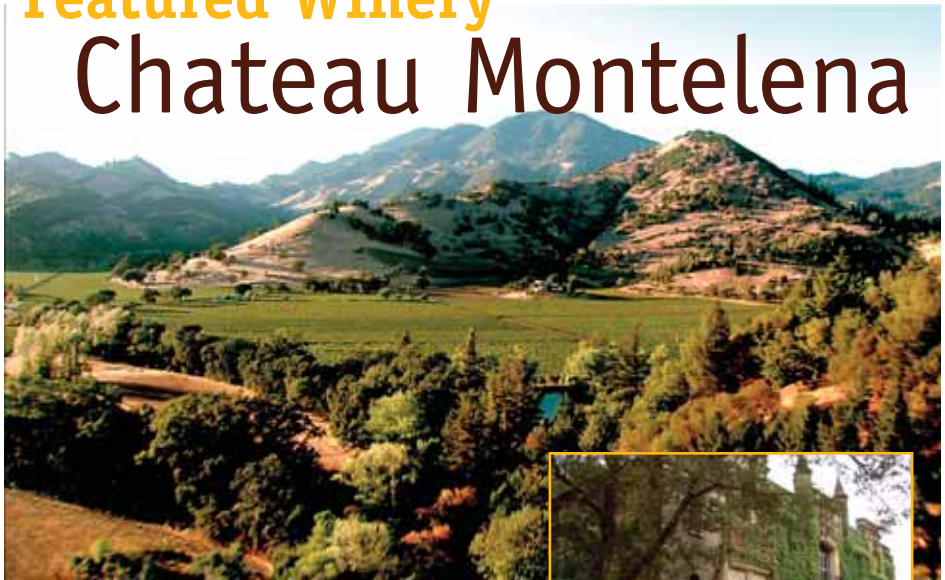
88 Murphy-Goode
2002 Chardonnay, Sonoma County (\$15)

They're known for Fumé but this Chard offers lively, accessible flavors and long, racy finish.

HENRY WINE GROUP

90 Torbreck 2003 Wood-cutter's Semillon, Barossa Valley, Australia (\$15) Fresh, crisp and aromatic with lovely

Featured Winery Chateau Montelena



Nearly every wine lover knows the story of the celebrated 1976 Paris tasting in which two Napa Valley wines – the

1972 Stag's Leap Wine Cellars Cabernet and the Chateau Montelena 1973 Chardonnay – were chosen as winners by top French judges in a blind tasting, trouncing the likes of Mouton-Rothschild and Leflaive's Puligny-Montrachet. In one afternoon, California wine was catapulted to global prominence. For those who want the details, George M. Taber's excellent new book on the topic, *Judgment of Paris*, will be out in September.

Montelena is justifiably proud of the Parisian upset, even more so because the winning Chard was only their second vintage. Jim Barrett, an attorney from Southern California, had arrived in Napa Valley in 1972, bought an empty stone chateau in Calistoga built in the 1880s, and set about creating a world-class estate winery. His winemaker for that sensational '73 vintage was Miljenko "Mike" Grgich, who later went on to co-found Grgich Hills winery. Barrett's son Bo, who had helped pull weeds from the vineyards as a teenager, came onboard as winemaker in 1982 and is still there.

Montelena limits its scope to just five wines. The Napa Valley Chardonnay is crafted in a lean Burgundian style, with no malolactic. I've tasted several older vintages, including the celebrated '73, and these Chards are built to last. The current 2002 and upcoming 2003 (both 90 points) are juicy, racy and crisp with nice minerality. The Napa Valley Cabernet is bright and juicy, with long, pure plum flavors; the 2001 (90 points) is available now and the 2002 (91 points) will be released in the spring of 2006.

The winery's complex flagship, the Montelena Estate Cabernet, is blended from lots variously grown on volcanic, alluvial and sedimentary soils, all present in the vineyard. The current 2001 (92 points) delivers fragrant plum and cassis backed by tangy acidity. The gorgeously dark and alluring 2003 (93 points) will be released in the spring of 2007. The Montelena Estate Zinfandel, now in its 2002 vintage (88 points), is spicy and dense with ripe berry flavors. A limited amount of lively Potter Valley Riesling is sold at the winery.

Nearly 30 years after the Paris tasting, Chateau Montelena remains a quintessential Napa Valley winery, still at the top of its game.

(Distributed by The Estates Group)

minerals and keen fruit.

ESTATE WINES LTD. 818-788-7801



87 Bogle 2003 Merlot, California (\$9) Long, balanced, charming and amazing for the price.

HENRY WINE GROUP

88 2001 Fourplay no. 1 Sicilia, Italy (\$12) Made by

Mario Schwenn of Dievole from four native Sicilian grapes, this is the first in a promised series from various Italian regions; meaty and stylish with firm acid structure.

EPIC WINES



90 Tyrrell's 2003 Lost Block Shiraz, South Eastern Australia (\$14) Packed with ripe

blackberry fruit and lovely spice; screwcap.

EPIC WINES

88 Pont d'Avignon 2003 Côtés du Rhône, France (\$15) Fresh and lush with bright plum and berry fruit with nice spice; long, rich and balanced.



GALLO

SPIRITS



91 Broker's London Dry Gin (\$18) Soft and fresh with dry flavors of spice, citrus and white flowers; the miniature bowler hat on the cap is a nice touch.

PACIFIC EDGE WINE & SPIRITS



92 Bulleit Bourbon Frontier Whiskey (\$23) Sweet hay and caramel on the nose; elegant and complex with honey, spice, treacle and some nice hot notes.

SOUTHERN WINE & SPIRITS

90 Hendrick's Gin (\$30) Spicy, clean and racy; the lovely, unique notes of cucumber make it very summery.

YOUNG'S MARKET



90 Don Julio Reposado Tequila (\$49) Nicely defined flavors with sultry background tones; sip neat or use in sophisticated cocktails.

PACIFIC WINE & SPIRITS



91 Alizé Bleu (\$16) An electric-blue mix of French vodka, Cognac, passionfruit, cherry, ginger and other exotic fruit flavors; tropical and seductive.

YOUNG'S MARKET

92 Mount Gay Extra Old Rum Dark Rum (\$30) Medium amber color; smooth and lush with toasty caramel and intense spice and dry, intense flavors; long and balanced, complex.

YOUNG'S MARKET



92 Campari Aperitivo (\$19) Vibrant carmine red; smooth and bitter with sweet, lush herbs and spice; a classic aperitif with soda.

SOUTHERN WINE & SPIRITS

90 E. & J. Distillers Cask & Cream Chocolate Temptation (\$10) Toasted and creamy with milk chocolate flavors and the bite of lively alcohol; a steal for the price.

WINE WAREHOUSE



Michter's 10 Year Old Straight Rye (\$60) A whiskey with its roots in the American Revolution and a favorite of George Washington; smooth and spicy with lovely, rich flavors of caramel, vanilla and toasty oak.

WINE WAREHOUSE