

Wine Spectator Insider

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THIS week's *Wine Spectator Insider* highlights some big-name areas: California's Napa Valley, France's Châteauneuf-du-Pape appellation and Washington's Columbia Valley. James Laube starts off with 17 classic-rated Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet-based blends from cult producers including Screaming Eagle and Joseph Phelps. All four of this issue's Hot Wines are from Napa Valley's 2007 vintage; three Cabernet Sauvignons score 98 points. See them on page 4.

James Molesworth rates white Châteauneuf-du-Papes here, six from the 2009 vintage, and one reserve from the 2006 vintage, produced by Château Rayas. Additionally, Harvey Steiman reviews several Washington Cabernet Sauvignon bottlings plus Merlot, Syrah and Cabernet-based blends. For more Washington Cabernet Sauvignon, read the Aug. 4 edition of the *Insider*.

California

COLGIN

IX Estate Napa Valley 2007

97 points | \$290 | 1,500 cases made | Red

Classy, intense and vibrant, full-bodied and layered, with wonderful balance, this red delivers vivid blackberry, wild berry, mineral, anise and dusty, cedary oak flavors that are trim and focused, yet expansive, as they unfold. Ends with a long, detailed finish. Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot. Best from 2011 through 2021.—J.L.

DALLA VALLE

Maya Napa Valley 2007

97 points | \$200 | 300 cases made | Red

A gorgeous wine that features rich, layered flavors, centered on ripe plum, blackberry and currant that are deep and concentrated, yet elegant and stylish. Full-bodied, ending with delicate touches of mineral and spice. Drink now through 2019.—J.L.

FUTO

Oakville 2007

97 points | \$200 | 374 cases made | Red

Offers a tight, compelling mix of herb, dried currant, mineral, sage and dusty, cedary oak, with black licorice, prune and graphite flavors that are full-bodied, dense and concentrated, ending with a long, gripping finish that keeps the flavors dancing. Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot. Best from 2012 through 2022.—J.L.

SCARECROW

Cabernet Sauvignon Rutherford 2007

97 points | \$225 | 1,000 cases made | Red

Firm, fresh, intense and vibrant, exhibiting a minerally crushed rock flavor and a texture mixed with ripe currant, plum and blackberry, with a dash of mocha-laced oak. Full-bodied, with floral scents and elegant balance. Firms on the finish, where the tannins give the flavors wonderful traction. Drink now through 2022.—J.L.

JOSEPH PHELPS

Cabernet Sauvignon Oakville Backus 2007

96 points | \$250 | 1,200 cases made | Red

A stylish, elegant youngster, with vivid mocha-covered raspberry, blackberry, red and black licorice flavors. Full-bodied and notably complex, tight and focused, ending with a persistent beam of flavors and firm tannins, with a dash of tobacco and cedar. Best from 2011 through 2022.—J.L.

RAMEY

Cabernet Sauvignon Oakville Pedregal Vineyard 2007

96 points | \$150 | 1,450 cases made | Red

Ripe and powerful, rich and chewy, with a dense core of loamy earth, caraway, dried currant, savory herb and mineral notes. Full-bodied, intense, chunky and deep, with a rich, persistent finish. Best from 2011 through 2017.—J.L.

STAGLIN

INEO Napa Valley 2007

96 points | \$250 | 240 cases made | Red

Elegantly styled, with complex aromatics of ripe plum, blackberry, floral, mocha and espresso. Firm and full-bodied, with smooth, fine-grained tannins that hold the flavors for a long, lingering, layered finish. Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Merlot. Drink now through 2011.—*J.L.*

VENGE

Cabernet Sauvignon Oakville Family Reserve 2007

96 points | \$125 | 75 cases made | Red

A big, ripe style that's rough hewn and chunky, yet deep and concentrated, with flashy plum, red and black cherry, red licorice and mineral notes, with a touch of green olive and espresso. Full-bodied, focused, complex and persistent. A notable achievement. Best from 2012 through 2024.—*J.L.*

DALLA VALLE

Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley 2007

95 points | \$150 | 270 cases made | Red

A gorgeous young wine that combines firm, focused currant, blackberry, spice, tobacco, earth and black licorice. Supple, subtle and layered, with the flavors reverberating on the long, detailed finish. Drink now through 2020.—*J.L.*

GEMSTONE

Yountville 2007

95 points | \$150 | 700 cases made | Red

Wonderfully complex aromas lead to firm, intense and concentrated flavors, showing a well-structured mix of black licorice, blackberry, plum and black cherry, with touches of graphite and mineral. Ends with tight, chewy yet ripe tannins that give the flavors traction. Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Petit Verdot. Best from 2011 through 2022.—*J.L.*

GHOST BLOCK

Cabernet Sauvignon Yountville Single Vineyard 2007

95 points | \$100 | 400 cases made | Red

Serves up a delightful mix of ripe dark fruits, with blackberry, black cherry and plum flavors that are supple and polished, with mineral, graphite and cedary oak showing on the finish. The tannins add traction to the flavors. Drink now through 2020.—*J.L.*

KOBALT

Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley 2007

95 points | \$90 | 680 cases made | Red

Tightly wound, firm and complex, offering a mix of cedar, loamy earth, dried currant and blackberry, with touches of black licorice, mineral and sage. Full-bodied, ending with ripe, chewy tannins that reverberate on the finish. Best from 2012 through 2022.—*J.L.*

RUDIUS

Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley 2007

95 points | \$65 | 110 cases made | Red

Firm and tightly wound, with excellent structure, depth, focus and concentration, but so compact now that it's unfair to uncork it. The laser beam of herb-laced currant, blackberry, mineral, pepper and black licorice are slow to unfold, but the proof is in the finish, where the flavors are presented on a beam of purity. Best from 2012 through 2022.—*J.L.*

France Rhône

DOMAINE GIRAUD

Châteauneuf-du-Pape White Les Gallimardes 2009

93 points | \$50 | 170 cases made | White

Very ripe and lush, with gorgeous white peach, persimmon, creamed pear, spring ginger and salted butter flavors that all glide seamlessly together through the lengthy, pure finish. Equal parts Grenache Blanc, Clairette, Roussanne and Bourboulenc. Drink now.—*J.M.*

DOMAINE ST.-PRÉFERT

Châteauneuf-du-Pape White 2009

93 points | \$55 | 375 cases made | White

Ripe and showy, with a lush core of creamed Jonagold apple, ginger, persimmon and melon flavors, all harnessed by a bright floral note and a long, stone-tinged finish. Thoroughly delicious. Drink now.—*J.M.*

LUCIEN & ANDRÉ BRUNEL

Châteauneuf-du-Pape White Les Cailloux 2009

92 points | \$44 | 100 cases imported | White

A lush, creamy, buttery style, with alluring mango and papaya notes laced with Jonagold apple, persimmon and sweetened butter, followed by a long, stylish finish. Drink now.—*J.M.*

CHÂTEAU RAYAS

Châteauneuf-du-Pape White Réserve 2006

92 points | \$175 | 55 cases imported | White

A mature style, but hanging on very nicely, with buttered brioche, ginger, creamed peach and dried persimmon notes that hang on through the creamy, rounded finish. Nice latent acidity holds it all together, with deceptive length. Drink now through 2011.—*J.M.*

PIERRE USSEGLIO & FILS

Châteauneuf-du-Pape White 2009

92 points | \$45 | 250 cases made | White

A bright, lively style, with tangy pear, green and yellow apple and Cavaillon melon notes laced with orange blossom and honeysuckle. This has a stylish, floral finish. Drink now.—*J.M.*

DOMAINE DE NALYS

Châteauneuf-du-Pape White 2009

91 points | \$39 | 250 cases imported | White

A tangy, mineral-driven style, with taut green plum, blanched almond and fresh salted butter notes that extend nicely through the pure, unadorned finish. Drink now.—*J.M.*

Washington

GRAND RÊVE

Cabernet Sauvignon Red Mountain Ciel du Cheval Vineyard Collaboration Series Reserve 2007

97 points | \$75 | 100 cases made | Red

Supple, generous and beautifully focused, accenting its ripe currant and raspberry fruit with hints of licorice, sage, red meat and mineral, lingering on the expressive finish. Combines ripeness with power and exceptional grace. Best from 2012 through 2017.—*H.S.*

DOUBLEBACK

Cabernet Sauvignon Walla Walla Valley 2007

95 points | \$82 | 600 cases made | Red

Dense, dark, powerful and expressive, not heavy but beautifully focused, pointing its black cherry, black currant, plum, cocoa and exotic spice flavors into the long, savory finish. The tannins submerge easily. Drink now through 2017.—*H.S.*

QUILCEDA CREEK

Cabernet Sauvignon Columbia Valley 2007

94 points | \$125 | 4,250 cases made | Red

Firm, with a light grip of tannins around a core of dark berry, currant, smoke and tobacco flavors. This has elegance and depth, with a welcome sense of reticence that doesn't push the flavors too strong. Finishes very long, with a silky texture. Drink now through 2017.—*H.S.*

BOOKWALTER

Protagonist Red Mountain 2007

93 points | \$50 | 938 cases made | Red

Polished and round, offering a juicy mouthful of plum, black currant, wet earth and hot stone flavors that push right through a fine layer of refined tannins. Impressive for its minerality, expressiveness and length. Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Syrah and Petit Verdot. Drink now through 2017.—*H.S.*

PEDESTAL

Merlot Columbia Valley 2007

93 points | \$55 | 2005 cases made | Red

Aromatically pure and focused, brimming with currant, blackberry and currant fruit shaded with white pepper and allspice. Hints at wet earth as the finish persists impressively. It seems like this can go on for a long time in the cellar. Drink now through 2017.—*H.S.*

SEQUEL

Syrah Columbia Valley 2007

93 points | \$55 | 1,950 cases made | Red

Ripe and round, delivering a lively mouthful of blueberry, plum, floral and white pepper flavors that cascade around one another through the long, vivid finish. Drink now through 2017.—*H.S.*

FEATHER

Cabernet Sauvignon Columbia Valley 2007

92 points | \$60 | 1,991 cases made | Red

Firm, chewy and distinctive for its smoky dried tomato accents around a core of blackberry, black cherry and bay leaf flavors, lingering expressively on the deftly balanced finish. Best from 2012 through 2017.—*H.S.*

FIVE STAR

Cabernet Sauvignon Walla Walla Valley 2007

92 points | \$34 | 1,250 cases made | Red

Lithe, expressive and delicious for its ripe currant, floral, cream and cocoa aromas and flavors, wrapping sinuously around the fine tannins as the finish persists expressively. Drink now through 2017.—*H.S.*

GRAND RÊVE

Ciel du Cheval Vineyard Collaboration Series II Red Mountain 2007

92 points | \$45 | 188 cases made | Red

Lithe and complex, offering a distinctive combination of peppery, floral and rich berry aromas and flavors that dance expressively through the long, vivid finish. Syrah, Grenache, Mourvèdre and Viognier. Drink now through 2017.—*H.S.*

GRAND RÊVE

Ciel du Cheval Vineyard Collaboration Series III Red Mountain 2007

92 points | \$45 | 250 cases made | Red

Dense and spicy, with black olive, mineral and black pepper overtones adding interest and depth to the blackberry and licorice core, persisting harmoniously on the long finish. Syrah. Best from 2011 through 2017.—*H.S.*

BUTY

Merlot-Cabernet Franc Columbia Valley 2008

91 points | \$40 | 265 cases made | Red

Lively, supple and distinctive for its pomegranate and raspberry flavors, underlaid with tobacco and licorice notes that persists through the generous finish. Best from 2011 through 2017.—*H.S.*

FIDELITAS

Boushey Vineyard Yakima Valley 2007

91 points | \$50 | 314 cases made | Red

Supple, almost plush, with a vibrant dash of acidity to lift the tobacco-accented currant, plum and roasted beet flavors, finishing on a smoky note. Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc. Best from 2012 through 2017.—*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.

MAYBACH

Cabernet Sauvignon Oakville Materium Weitz Vineyard 2007
98 points | \$125 | 460 cases made | Red

A riveting wine, notably rich and sophisticated, with layers of plush yet firm mocha, blackberry, plum and wild berry flavors that are full-blown. A dash of lavender and mineral and floral scents give this great depth, persistence and range of flavor, with a grand finish. Best from 2012 through 2024. *From California.—J.L.*

SCREAMING EAGLE

Cabernet Sauvignon Oakville 2007
98 points | \$750 | 750 cases made | Red

A supple, sophisticated, elegant and stylish wine that wows you with purity, finesse and understated nuances. Full-bodied, with a core of red and black cherry, currant, mineral and sage, ending with a long, layered, persistent, graceful finish, all in a style that distinguishes itself from most Napa Cabernets. Drink now through 2024. *From California.—J.L.*

STAGLIN

Cabernet Sauvignon Rutherford 25th Anniversary Selection 2007
98 points | \$175 | 2,500 cases made | Red

A pure and seductive style, with enticing aromas of mocha, baking spices, melted chocolate, ripe plum, black cherry and black licorice that are supple, elegant, balanced, rich and layered, ending with an amazingly long and persistent finish. Drink now through 2020. *From California.—J.L.*

REVANA

Cabernet Sauvignon St. Helena 2007
97 points | \$125 | 2,000 cases made | Red

Aromas of roasted herb, red pepper and sage are complex, elegant and spicy, joined by ripe currant, plum and black cherry fruit, but this is at its best on the full-bodied palate, where the texture is supple, graceful and polished. Drink now through 2020. *From California.—J.L.*

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

Kim Marcus Managing editor, New York
Joined *Wine Spectator* in 1988. Tasting beat: Austria, Greece, Port, 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, Bordeaux, Chile, Finger Lakes, Loire Valley, Rhône Valley, South Africa

Bruce Sanderson Tasting director, New York
Joined *Wine Spectator* in 1993. Tasting beat: Burgundy, Champagne, Germany, Italy

Harvey Steiman Editor at large, San Francisco
Joined *Wine Spectator* in 1983. Tasting beat: Australia, New Zealand, Oregon, Washington

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

Tasting staff:
Tim Fish (California),
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