

Tasting Notes

BY DAVID LAWRASON

Recommendations from an international selection of great-value bottles from the January 19 Vintages release

WHITE

Kruger-Rumpf 2004 Munsterer Rheinberg Riesling Kabinett

\$16.85 | Germany | 88 points

Slim, delightful Mosel Valley riesling with youthful, just-picked apple crunch and freshness that's surprising, given the passage of three years. Peach, lemon, and mineral notes, as well. It's off-dry, light, and built around classic Mosel acidity and minerality, with very good length. LCBO 991745

Bollini 2006 Pinot Grigio

\$16.85 | Italy | 88 points

The immediate aromatic burst of peach-pineapple signals a very ripe vintage or bright fruit-first wine-making—perhaps both. Certainly better than the mostly bland pinot grigios of yesteryear. More weight, roundness, fruit sweetness, and richness—and clean as a whistle. Great everyday-sipping white. LCBO 951319

Quinta de Azevedo 2006 Vinho Verde

\$11.85 | Portugal | 87 points

Grab a clutch of bottles for the first days of spring—or your next oyster party. From the north of Portugal, not far from the sea, comes a light, lively, crisp, and mouth-wateringly dry white that seems to capture the salt-laden breezes. The touch of spritz adds vitality; the flavours are subtle dried apple, anise, and wet stone. Great value. LCBO 727115

Muga 2006 Rioja Branco

\$15.85 | Spain | 89 points

Great value in an elegant barrelled white from the local viura grape. Surprising complexity and depth at the price, with a refined, gentle aroma of hazelnut, peat smoke, dried peach, and sage. Some minerality and firmness on the finish. Very good length. Serve in lieu of chardonnay. LCBO 958736

RED

Saurus 2005 Malbec Select

\$14.85 | Argentina | 89 points

From cool Patagonia comes a very floral, pretty malbec with more charm than its cousins from hotter Mendoza. Lifted blackberry, spice, coffee, and meaty character on the nose, with firm acidity and tannin centring perfectly ripened fruit. Very good length. Drink now or cellar up to five years. LCBO 55459

Antignano 2004 Montefalco Rosso

\$14.85 | Italy | 88 points

Around the village of Montefalco in the gentle heart of Umbria grows a rugged, monstrous, and tannic red variety called sagrantino. Don't worry; this is not made from that grape; it's a more charming sangiovese that also grows in Chianti next door. Lovely aromas of

leather, coffee, pine nuts, and sour cran-currant fruit set in a mid-weight, balanced, classy frame. Pour this obscure red with confidence. LCBO 51755

Parri Estates 2005 Shiraz Viognier

\$17.85 | Australia | 90 points

Finished among the top five shirazes at the Canadian-based International Value Wine Awards 2007, and indeed, it's incredibly concentrated and complex for the price. Deeply coloured and jam-packed with ripe black cherry, mincemeat, leather, and peppery complexity. Full-bodied, dense, and rich, with excellent length. LCBO 48488

Chateau D'Aiguille 2004 Cotes de Castillon

\$39 | France | 91 points

Very svelte merlot-based Bordeaux from a small region overshadowed by more expensive Saint Emilion next door. Deep, vibrant purple-black colour, with rich black cherry, cedar, pepper, and fine fresh herb scents. Already smooth, supple, and seductive, but another two years will soften the edges. Best 2010 to 2014. LCBO 671370

Cave de Tain 2003 Crozes-Hermitage

\$16.85 | France | 88 points

A minor Rhone Valley classic lacking the depth of more famous Hermitage but exhibiting enough flavour at this surprisingly low price. Authentic, lifted smoked meat, black olive, dried cherry, and some gaminess typical of northern Rhône syrah. Mid-weight, dry, a more traditional style; best now to 2010. LCBO 572230

Marchique 2004 Cabernet Franc/Petit Verdot

\$13.85 | Chile | 89 points

An unusual, effective pairing of two varieties rarely seen in Chile, with cab franc providing aromatics and petit verdot laying in the structural foundation. Very ripe blueberry fruit with mint, coffee, and floral notes. Full-bodied and dense, with a sense of restraint not found in Chile's often bombastic reds—especially not at \$14. LCBO 48298

Taurino 2003 Salentino Rosso Riserva

\$15.85 | Italy | 89 points

From Apulia in Italy's deep south comes a sensuous, rich, ripe, and mature red with complex leather, figs, almond, and pipe-tobacco complexity well beyond its price. Full-bodied, soft, and a touch sweet, with alcohol heat on the finish. You'll not often find flavour like this under \$20. Now to 2010. LCBO 411892

Hacienda El Espino 2004 1707 Variades

\$13.95 | Spain | 89 points

From the Almansa region near Valencia comes a multi-grape blend named for the date of a famous local battle. A gorgeous fragrance is conjured up from the monastrell, grenache, syrah, and cabernet-plum jam, pepper, celery salt, tobacco. Full-bodied, dense, and fleshy with a strong peppery/savory edge. Excellent length. LCBO 673582

END