

ARGENTINA

2007 Valentin Bianchi 'Particular' Malbec**90 points, James Molesworth, Wine Spectator 15 Nov 09**

Very fresh, with a high-toned floral hint backed by bright raspberry, damson, plum and red currant fruit. Alluring spice and mocha shadings chime in on the polished finish. Delicious.

2007 Altos Las Hormigas Malbec Vineyards Selection Reserva**91 points, James Molesworth, Wine Spectator, 31 Oct 09**

A dark, lush style, with a dense core of plum sauce and crushed blackberry fruit laid over velvety tannins. The long, toast and black liquorice-filled finish carries some heft, but stays nicely balanced.

2008 Bodega Renacer Punto Final Malbec Clasico**90 points, Antonio Galloni, Robert Parker's Wine Advocate, Aug 09**

Made in a late-harvest style, this deep purple-coloured wine reveals a nose of spice box, incense, and black cherry. Layered and rich on the palate, it conceals some ripe underlying tannin that should allow the wine to provide pleasure over the next 4 years.

2006 Bodega Renacer Punto Final Malbec Reserva**92 points, Antonio Galloni, Robert Parker's Wine Advocate, Aug 09**

Opaque purple-coloured, it offers up a fragrant bouquet of cedar, scorched earth, lavender, and black cherry. Layered, dense, and concentrated, it has tons of savoury black fruit, spice notes, and excellent balance.

AUSTRALIA

2008 Cullen Mangan Vineyard Sauvignon Semillon**Wines of the Month, Decanter, Dec 09**

Made using biodynamic methods, this is crisp and vibrant with grassy, peapod aromas. The flavours are similarly lean and green, with spiky fruit and an ashy touch, all bound up in a taut, mineral structure. Lip-smackingly fresh.

2007 Cullen Kevin John Chardonnay Margaret River**Wine of Month, Sarah Ahmed www.thewinedetective.co.uk, Sep 09**

I loved the 2006 Chardonnay from the coolest year on record and, incredibly, the 2007, a warmer vintage, is way snappier, with racy lime, crisp apple fruit and an ever so subtle savoury leesy tang. Long, stony and focused it has more in common with a drizza-bone Australian Riesling than a Chardonnay.

2007 Cullen Kevin John Chardonnay Margaret River**95 points, Huan Hooke, Gourmet Traveller Wine, Dec/Jan 10**

Smoky, toasty oak and lees-marked aroma and flavours that build more grapefruit as you sip. Deep and persistent with a palate structure that combines power and finesse. Complex, fine and elegant, it's an exemplary chardonnay.

2007 Cullen 'Diana Madeline' Margaret River**92 points, Harvey Steiman, Wine Spectator, 20 Sep 09**

Velvety in texture and lively in flavour, with red berry, cherry, mineral and rosemary flavours competing for attention on a vibrant frame. This has transparency, elegance and grace, with a very long finish.

2005 Plantagenet Shiraz**Peter Bourne, Gourmet Traveller's Wine Collector's Issue, Aug/Sep 09**

A lot of dark berries, chocolate and Cherry Ripe. It's quite chewy and solid but without bitterness – a rich, powerful wine.

2008 Grosset 'Polish' Hill Clare Valley Riesling

Jonathan Goodall, Food & Travel, Dec 09

Pale but powerful with mineral nose and hints of Riesling's trademark kerosene aroma (a good thing!). The palate is laden with pucker-up, lemon and lime flavours. Zesty, juicy and moreish with a long dry, fresh finish.

2007 Grosset Adelaide Hills Pinot Noir

93 points, Gourmet Traveller's Wine Collector's Issue, Aug/Sep 09

Sweet-cherry, almost bubblegum aromas; delicious cherry flavours; sweet ripe and lovely. Lighter coloured but with a good red-purple hue. Medium-bodied, finely textured, stylish, fragrant, almost luscious flavour.

2008 Mount Horrocks Cordon Cut Riesling

18.5 points, Wine of the Week, Jancis Robinson.com, Sep 09

Pale gold. Intense wild honey and white blossom fragrance. A succulent mango juice, but air-borne on finely-spun acidity and freshness. Such purity and delicacy! Diaphanous. Apricot, lime marmalade and exquisitely precise cut-glass edges. Glowing with honeyed fruit.

2008 Charles Melton Rose of Virginia

Garry Clark, Imbibe, Sep/Oct 09

In Clairet style, it's very dark in colour, with vibrant fruit in the nose: rosehips, alpine strawberries and cranberry.

2007 John Duval 'Plexus' Barossa Valley Shiraz, Grenache, Mourvedre

91 points, Harvey Steiman, Wine Spectator, 20 Sep 09

Creamy in texture, this is ripe with cherry, pomegranate, ash and black pepper flavours, persisting nicely on the long, expressive finish.

2007 John Duval 'Entity' Barossa Valley Shiraz

92 points, Harvey Steiman, Wine Spectator, 20 Sep 09

Firm, focused and juicy, with orange peel-scented cherry and spice flavours, this feels like it's holding something back despite the generosity of flavour. Lingers well against fine tannins.

2008 Shaw and Smith Adelaide Hills M3 Chardonnay

94 points, Huon Hooke, Gourmet Traveller Wine, Dec/Jan 10

Tightly focused, restrained yet complex, with potential to age and improve. Subtle mealy, nutty aromas, a hint of nougat, with underlying complexity and lots of detail. In the mouth it reveals concentration and length.

2007 Shaw & Smith Shiraz

Jonathan Goodall, Food & Travel, Dec 09

Inky dark, cool-climate Shiraz with notes of cassis, leather and cigar boxes on the nose. Ripe blackcurrants, plums and damsons on the palate with a touch of cinnamon and a twist of pepper. Full-bodied with ripe tannins, gliding smoothly across the tongue.

2007 Shaw & Smith Shiraz

Best Buys, Huon Hooke, Gourmet Traveller Wine, Dec/Jan 10

A distinctly meaty note to its spice and super-ripe blackberry aromas. It's rich, full-bodied and profound, with lush fruit and plush texture, its oak immaculately interwoven with the fruit and grape tannins, resulting in a beautifully balanced wine with at least a 15-year cellaring future.

2008 SC Pannell, Pronto Rosso Adelaide

Top 10 Recommendation, www.decanter.com Aug 09

Very convincing if totally unorthodox blend.. There's a fennel, black fruit and cherry liqueur character to the fruit, and while the flavour is aromatic and heady it's not too intense - there's a certain daintiness, despite the pronounced fruit.

2007 Balnaves of Coonawarra Cabernet Sauvignon

92 points, Gourmet Traveller's Wine Collector's Issue, Aug/Sep 09

Vibrant wine in all regards: colour, nose and palate, with a touch of eucalyptus in the aroma. Excellent concentration, structure and potential.

2007 Innocent Bystander Chardonnay

Best Buys, Jeremy Oliver, Gourmet Traveller Wine, Dec/Jan 10

Giant Steps' second label features this generous and approachable chardonnay whose vibrant presence of grapefruit, peach and melon, restrained oak and pleasing mineral and charcuterie-like complexity is simply ready to enjoy. Fresh and fruit-driven, with a zesty, lemony acidity, it's smooth and lively, with just a touch of class.

2008 William Downie Mornington Pinot Noir

94 Points, 100 Top New Releases, Gourmet Traveller, Oct/Nov 09

A more powerful Pinot than Downie's Yarra Valley wine, this has a rich nose showing some oak among the complex aromas, and a satisfying, layered palate with fullish body and firm, tight structure. Muscular and impressive.

2008 William Downie Gippsland Pinot Noir

93 Points, 100 Top New Releases, Gourmet Traveller, Oct/Nov 09

Vanilla and bold, essency, dark-berry fruit and oak aromas; the palate is chunky and big flavoured, with firm tannins and a very long finish. Heaps of potential.

2008 William Downie Gippsland Pinot Noir

4 stars, Christmas Recommendations, Decanter, Jan 10

Weightier and more primary than Downie's Yarra Valley or Mornington Peninsula Pinots, this is relatively gutsy, with young, expressive, juicy red fruit from top to tail. Great stuff and immediately rewarding.

2007 Greenstone Vineyard Heathcote Sangiovese

Matt Skinner, The Age (AUS) Nov 09

Certain to become one of Australia's benchmark examples of Sangiovese, this has plenty of brooding dark fruit coupled with trademark tobacco and spice. A similarly intense palate is nicely framed by dry and chalky Sangiovese tannin and good acidity.

2008 Clonakilla Viognier

95 points, Jeremy Oliver, 11 Jun 2009

Crystalline and mineral, this savoury young Viognier is fractionally raw-edged in its youth, but has the length and refinement to settle down with time in the bottle. Backed by dusty, musky scents of cloves and cinnamon, its nutty bouquet of apricot, melon and tangerine precedes an unctuous, concentrated and fleshy palate whose gentle, smooth and creamy presence overlies some angular skinsy, spiritry aspects that have yet to integrate. It finishes long, dry and nutty, with a lingering core of bright flavour.

2008 Clonakilla Hilltops Shiraz

Best Buy Wines, Peter Bourne, Gourmet Traveller, Dec/Jan 10

It's a medium-weight style with plenty of sweet spices – liquorice and star anise. Pure red berry fruit dominates the nose with a hint of perfume from the addition of a tiny quantity of Viognier. The palate is ultra-clean and fine with intense yet delicious dark berry fruit flavours restrained by a tight mesh of acid and dusty tannin finish. It's perfectly slurpable right now but it will evolve nicely for a few years.

2008 Clonakilla O'Riada Shiraz

90 Points, Huon Hooke, Gourmet Traveller, Oct/Nov 09

Fragrant and spicy – pure seduction! Cool-climate expression, with an elegant palate and supple, smooth texture.

2008 Clonakilla Shiraz Viognier

97 points, Jeremy Oliver, 11 Jun 09

Building towards a crescendo of richness and strength, this is a stellar wine of rare balance, poise and elegance. Its floral, musky and spicy bouquet of pristine black and red berries, ground pepper and cedar/vanilla oak precede a silky-smooth, supple and seamless palate, whose piercingly intense berry/plum flavours, briary undertones and seasoned oak deliver exceptional length and harmony. Precisely focused, it finishes quite savoury and spicy, with emphatic depth and presence.

2008 Clonakilla Shiraz Viognier

96 Points, Peter Bourne, Gourmet Traveller, Oct/Nov 09

Absolutely fabulous colour. Delightful plum, cherry, spice aromas with an apricot lift. Rich on the palate, yet elegant with power. The finish goes on and on.

2008 Clonakilla Shiraz Viognier

96 points, Huon Hooke, Gourmet Traveller, Dec/Jan 10

An effortlessly elegant and balanced wine of real refinement. Meaty, spicy and red-fruit aromas with a lick of nicely judged oak, medium-to full-bodied and fine-boned in structure. A wine of grace rather than muscle.

FRANCE

NV Domaine Pfister Cremant D'Alsace

Christmas Recommendations, Decanter, Jan 10

A feminine fizz with a gentle honeycomb nose that has surprising intensity. Freshly cut apples lead the palate, complemented by peach and honey.

2007 Domaine Pfister Riesling Alsace Grand Cru Engelberg

91 points, Alison Napjus, Wine Spectator, Sep 09

This open-knit white displays juicy acidity that makes the lips smack and brings you back for another sip of the tangerine, floral, pineapple and star fruit notes. Fresh and lively, with a lovely harmony.

2007 Château de Chambert Cahors Malbec

Clinton Cawood, Imbibe, Sep/Oct 09

With dark fruit and a degree of spice, this is quite punchy on the palate, with purity of fruit and good silky tannins. Approachable, but still a serious accompaniment for food.

2008 Paul Jaboulet Aîné Parallele 45 Blanc

Wines of the Month, Decanter, Jan 10

Taking its name from the 45th north parallel that runs near Jaboulet's cellars, this is breezy and restrained wine. Crunchy and harmonious, it's interwoven with pears, herbs, minerals, apples, lavender and apricot. Food friendly, with flavours that linger.

2006 Paul Jaboulet Aîné Cornas Domaine De St Pierre

Wines of the Year, Decanter, Dec 09

Mulled fruit with a hint of decay. Red fruits on the road to jam. Some in-built tannins.

2005 Paul Jaboulet Aîné Hermitage La Chapelle

Peter Bourne, Best Buys, Gourmet Traveller, Oct/Nov 09

It's aromatic with lots of sweet cinnamon spice, dusty cedar and violet like floral notes overlaying a core of dark berry fruit. The palate is only medium-weight but very intense with lovely poise and style. It's both soft and harmonious with a delightful fragrant finish.

2007 Domaine des Bosquets Gigondas

92 points, James Molesworth, Wine Spectator, 30 Nov 09

This is loaded with a wide range of delicious ripe boysenberry, blueberry and blackberry fruit, all laid over notes of violet, graphite, Pastis and black tea. The long finish is toasty but well-integrated. Should age wonderfully.

2007 Château de Vaudieu Châteauneuf-du-Pape

92 points, James Molesworth, Wine Spectator, 15 Nov 09

This is saturated, with braised fig, melted black liquorice and freshly brewed espresso notes forming the core, with bittersweet ganache, mesquite and iron notes weaving through the background. The long, tarry finish has really nice drive. A Domaine on the rise.

2008 La Croix Gratiot Coteaux du Languedoc Picpoul de Pinet

89 points, Wine Advocate, David Schildknecht, Aug 09

Saffron, clover, honeysuckle, orange zest, and sea breeze in the nose lead to a luscious, bright, exuberantly juicy palate tinged with saline, alkaline, and zesty notes that add to the invigoration of its long finish. Keep some of this handy to your refrigerator and table over the coming year.

2007 Chateau St Roch Cotes du Roussillon Chimeres

92 points, Wine Advocate, David Schildknecht, Aug 09

Fresh and jam-like layers of black raspberry, rhubarb, and fresh cherry in the nose and mouth are tinged with resinous sage, rosemary, and lavender, while striking top notes of gentian and violet waft from the glass. For all of its saturating sweet ripeness and fresh berry brightness on a silken-textured palate, this also harbours low-toned roast meatiness, while piquant notes of toasted pistachio and almond, black pepper, cherry pit, and herbs keep its long finish far from any danger of succumbing to superficial sweetness.

GERMANY

2008 Dreissigacker Estate Riesling

Recommended Wines, Restaurant, Oct 09

Baked apples, spicy and slightly exotic on the nose; fruity in the mouth, just off-dry with lively acidity and lingering finish. Lovely aperitif.

2007 Dreissigacker Bechtheimer Riesling

Recommended Wines, Restaurant, Oct 09

Appley, slightly mineral and very grapey Riesling. Tangy but not sharp, dryish – more fruity, than sweet. Very good length. Worth cellaring too.

ITALY

2006 Bruno Rocca Barbaresco 'Rabaja'

91 points, James Suckling, Wine Spectator, 30 Sep 09

Aromatic, with ripe strawberry and flowers on the nose. Full-bodied, with soft tannins and a fruit and milk chocolate aftertaste. Fruity and attractive.

2005 Aldo Conterno Barolo 'Cicala':

95 points Wine Spectator, James Suckling, 31 Jul 09

Strawberry pie and cream aromas lead to a full-bodied palate. Very thick and powerful, with big, velvety tannins and masses of fruit. A blockbuster style.

2005 Aldo Conterno Barolo 'Colonello'

95 points Wine Spectator, James Suckling, 31 Jul 09

Enticing aromas of plum tart and vanilla bean aromas follow through to a full body, with a beautiful concentration of ripe fruit and super silky tannins. A wine with beautiful balance and finesse that's also concentrated and rich.

2005 Aldo Conterno Barolo 'Romirasco'

94 points Wine Spectator, James Suckling, 31 Jul 09

Blackberry and blueberry aromas, with light vanilla and floral character, lead to a full-bodied palate, with very sweet fruit and chewy tannins. Turns to a real mouthful. A beautiful single vineyard wine.

2008 G D Vajra Langhe Bianco Riesling

91 points, Antonio Galloni, Robert Parker's Wine Advocate, Oct 09

Simply gorgeous in this vintage. Rich and expansive, the wine blossoms on the palate with an intricate array of honeyed fruit.

2008 G D Vajra Dolcetto D'Alba

4 stars, Christmas Recommendations, Decanter, Jan 10

Perfumed, bewitching, feminine notes of rose petals and violets. The palate is similarly floral, augmented by red cherry and berry fruit, mineral presence and typical Dolcetto tannins that bind it all together.

2007 G D Vajra Barbera d'Alba

90 points, Antonio Galloni, Robert Parker's Wine Advocate, Oct 09

A plummy, generous wine with terrific definition and focus in its aromas and flavours. There is a wonderful minerality that frames the long, delicate finish. Sweet raspberries, menthol, liquorice and spices add complexity on the close.

2005 G D Vajra Barolo Albe

91 points, Antonio Galloni, Robert Parker's Wine Advocate, Oct 09

Caresses the palate with a soft core of perfumed fruit. This generous, open Barolo isn't likely to be a long-term ager, but it offers tons of class and elegance. The finish is round and impeccably refined.

2004 G D Vajra Barolo Albe

90 points, Antonio Galloni, Robert Parker's Wine Advocate, Oct 09

A soft, forward wine perfect for near-term drinking. Sweet tobacco, herbs, liquorice, leather and plums emerge from this medium-bodied Barolo with lovely grace and understatement. The Albe reveals notable clarity and length.

2007 G D Vajra Nebbiolo Langhe

91 points, Antonio Galloni, Robert Parker's Wine Advocate, Oct 09

Another impeccable, harmonious wine laced with plump, perfumed Nebbiolo fruit. The Langhe Nebbiolo offers outstanding length in a soft, accessible style that is sure to find many admirers. This is a great bottle of wine for the money

2007 G D Vajra Dolcetto d'Alba Coste & Fossati

90 points, Antonio Galloni, Robert Parker's Wine Advocate, Oct 09

The fruit flows effortlessly in a rich, sumptuous expression of Dolcetto. The wine possesses tons of concentration in a dark, brooding style. The Coste & Fossati is one of the more masculine, brooding Dolcettos readers are likely to come across in Barolo. Although Dolcetto is best drunk young, this is one wine that has the stuffing and pedigree to develop positively with a few additional years in bottle. It is sublime.

2006 G D Vajra Barbera d'Alba Superiore

93 points, Antonio Galloni, Robert Parker's Wine Advocate, Oct 09

A soft, sensual style. While most important Barberas today reveal considerable concentration, this is a wine that relies first and foremost on a level of finesse that is all its own. Silky tannins frame a finish of extraordinary elegance.

2005 G D Vajra Barolo Bricco Delle Viole

95 points, Antonio Galloni, Robert Parker's Wine Advocate, Oct 09

Insanely beautiful. A sweet, inviting bouquet leads to roses, cherries, raspberries, flowers and spices. The wine possesses gorgeous inner perfume and wonderful depth as it hovers on the palate with a Burgundian sense of weightlessness. This is an emotionally moving, delicate wine of the highest level. The 2005 Bricco delle Viole is quite approachable today. Simply put, this is a marvellous bottle of Barolo!

2004 G D Vajra Barolo Bricco Delle Viole

94 points, Antonio Galloni, Robert Parker's Wine Advocate, Oct 09

The structured, layered 2004 has begun to develop wonderful complexity in its tobacco, leather, liquorice, spices, minerals and menthol. This is another sublime Barolo in the making.

2007 Massolino Barbera d'Alba Gisep

90 points, Antonio Galloni, Robert Parker's Wine Advocate, Oct 09

A rich, silky-textured wine laced with ripe dark fruit, leather, spices and French oak. Finessed and elegant throughout, the 2007 Gisep flows with outstanding balance and a harmonious personality.

2005 Massolino Barolo

92 points, Wine Spectator, James Suckling 31 Jul 09

This is so pure and beautiful on the nose, with strawberry and raspberry character. Full-bodied, with silky tannins and pretty fruit in reserve. Long and silky.

2005 Massolino Barolo 'Margheria'

95 points Wine Spectator, James Suckling 31 Jul 09

There's lovely sweet fruit, cedar and strawberry character in this wine, which is full and super silky, with ultra refined tannins and a plum and berry aftertaste. Very polished and pretty.

2004 Massolino Barolo 'Parafada'

Wines of the Year, Decanter, Dec 09

Ripe nose, spices and flowers. Powerful, but voluptuous, fragrant, spicy, flowery. Very complex, very good.

2005 Massolino Barolo 'Parafada'

91 points, Wine Spectator, James Suckling 31 Jul 09

Highly perfumed, with sweet strawberry and cherry aromas that follow through to a full body, with balanced, silky tannins and a pretty finish. Delicate yet structured.

2007 Cortegiara Valpolicella Ripasso Superiore

Top 10 Wines: Decanter Fine Wine Encounter 2009, www.decanter.com, Nov 09

This is a big solid wine from one of the finest producers in Veneto. It has plenty of warmth, and is packed with ripe red cherry fruit. The texture is fresh, and the bright flavours balanced by a pleasantly fresh acidity.

2006 Allegrini Palazzo della Torre

90 points, Antonio Galloni, Robert Parker's Wine Advocate, Aug 09

The 2006 Palazzo della Torre comes across as somewhat restrained for this wine. This is a very polished, elegant Palazzo della Torre with pretty layers of mocha, spices and new leather that add complexity to the fresh, vibrant fruit.

2008 Pieropan Soave

Wine of the Week, Joanna Simon (www.joannasimon.com), 14 Aug 2009

Classico in all but name. Nino Pieropan, one of Soave Classico's top producers, has elected to use screwcap instead of cork for his 2008, which means foregoing the Classico designation. Daft, but that's Italian DOCG wine law for you. The wine is excellent – dry, crisp and lingering with lovely, clear lemon fruit and hints of blossom and honey.

2008 Pieropan Soave

Clinton Cawood, Imbibe, Sep/Oct 09

Now in Stelvin, and consequently without its 'Classico' denomination, this Soave has attractive mandarin and white pepper aromas, broad acidity and excellent persistence, with slightly savoury, nutty character.

2008 Livio Felluga Pinot Grigio

91 points, 'Smart Buys', James Suckling, Wine Spectator, 15 Dec 09

Offers apple, pie, mineral, piecrust and ripe mango aromas. Full-bodied, with bright acidity and a very lively finish.

2007 Livio Felluga Colli Orientali dei Friuli 'Terre Alte'

92 points, James Suckling, Wine Spectator, 15 Dec 09

Fresh and aromatic, with sliced apple and pear. Full-bodied, with mineral, honey and dried apple notes that follow through to a long finish. Very complex.

2007 Poggiotondo Chianti Superiore

Robert Parker's Wine Advocate, Aug 09

A sleek, racy wine with impeccable balance in its ripe fruit. The wine reveals a long, harmonious finish, with pretty floral notes that add a sense of lift on the close. This is a terrific effort from Poggiotondo.

2007 Fontodi Chianti Classico

91 points, James Suckling, Wine Spectator, 31 Oct 09

Blackberry and dark plum aromas follow through to a full body, with silky tannins and a bright, fruity finish. There's nice a combination of bright fruit and clean acidity.

2006 Fontodi Chianti Classico

91 points, Antonio Galloni, Robert Parker's Wine Advocate, Aug 09

It is a big, super-ripe Chianti that captures all of the best qualities of the vintage in its rich fruit and beautifully defined aromatics. This is a serious, structured Chianti that can be enjoyed now, but that also has the stuffing to age gracefully for years.

2007 Fontodi Pinot Nero

92 points, Antonio Galloni, Robert Parker's Wine Advocate, Aug 09

The 2007 Pinot Nero is fat, juicy and ripe, but also impeccably balanced. This opulent Pinot flows from the glass as sensual varietal fruit is laced with elements of flowers, spices and game in a wine of notable purity. To be sure, the warmth of Panzano is felt, but the wine remains remarkably centred and poised. This is a gorgeous effort.

2006 Fontodi Syrah 'Case Via'

95 points, James Suckling, Wine Spectator, 31 Oct 09

Shows gorgeous grilled meat, ripe fruit and light toasty oak character, with velvety tannins and fresh acidity.

2006 Fontodi Syrah

94 points, Antonio Galloni, Robert Parker's Wine Advocate, Aug 09

The 2006 Syrah is a big, massive effort loaded with dark fruit, tar, liquorice, earthiness and game. This is a decidedly powerful, intense wine that needs some time in the glass for the varietal notes to fully emerge. The wine's balance is impeccable.

2006 Fontodi Chianti Classico Riserva Vigna del Sorbo

95 points, Antonio Galloni, Robert Parker's Wine Advocate, Aug 09

The 2006 Chianti Classico Riserva Vigna del Sorbo is seriously dark, rich and intense. Dark cherries, tobacco, herbs and minerals come together in this brooding, weighty Vigna del Sorbo. Today the wine comes across as completely closed and folded in on itself, but with time it should emerge as a beauty.

2006 Fontodi Flaccianello della Pieve IGT

99 points, James Suckling, Wine Spectator, 31 Oct 09

Shows excellent colour and richness for a Sangiovese, with aromas of sultana, coffee, toasty oak and vanilla bean. Full-bodied, with masses of fruit and chewy tannins. The concentration and depth of fruit and layers of tannins are breathtaking. A blockbuster.

2006 Fontodi Flaccianello della Pieve IGT

96 points, Antonio Galloni, Robert Parker's Wine Advocate, Aug 09

Just as phenomenal as it was when I tasted it from barrel. This spectacularly ripe and concentrated wine reveals masses of dark cherries, plums, licorice, smoke, violets, French oak and minerals that coat the palate with extraordinary richness. The wine possesses plenty of structure, but the sheer density of the fruit provides stunning balance.

2007 Fattoria di Felsina I Sistri Chardonnay

90 points, James Suckling Wine Spectator, 31 Jul 09

Offers ripe apple, with spicy, creamy notes on the nose. Full-bodied, with a gentle, silky texture and subtle fruit and spice, showing white pepper and apple pie flavours. Very stylish.

2006 Fattoria di Felsina Chianti Classico Riserva

92 points, Antonio Galloni, Robert Parker's Wine Advocate, Aug 09

The 2006 Chianti Classico Riserva is simply beautiful. Everything is in gorgeous balance as dark cherries, plums, violets and spices come together in a fresh, vibrant expression of Sangiovese. The wine is singing today, but it will be even more delicious in another year or two.

2006 Fattoria di Felsina Chianti Classico Riserva Rancia

95 points, Antonio Galloni, Robert Parker's Wine Advocate, Aug 09

The 2006 Chianti Classico Riserva Rancia is a vibrant, focused wine that flows with the essence of dark fruit, minerals and flowers. The wine possesses gorgeous length and proportion, all of which is framed by powerful yet well-integrated tannins. Simply put, this is a superb Chianti that also happens to be one of the best relative values in fine, age worthy wine.

2006 Fattoria di Felsina Fontalloro

95 points, James Suckling, Wine Spectator, 31 Oct 09

Chocolate, blackberry and black cherry aromas lead to a full-bodied palate, with velvety tannins and a deep concentration of fruit. Powerfully rich and polished. Big and structured. An amazing Sangiovese.

2006 Fattoria di Felsina Fontalloro

94 points, Antonio Galloni, Robert Parker's Wine Advocate, Aug 09

Enticing, expressive aromatics lead to an expansive core of fruit. Round, finessed tannins give the wine an additional level of polish...There is superb purity to the fruit and wonderful overall balance. Tar, smoke, liquorice, and grilled herbs come to life on the finish.

2007 Isole e Olena Chardonnay Collezione de Marchi

91 points, James Suckling, Wine Spectator, 31 Oct 09

Offers toasty oak, cream and tropical fruit, with citrus undertones, Full-bodied, with creamy vanilla bean and coconut flavours. Thick and rich. Very powerful.

2007 Isole e Olena Chardonnay Collezione de Marchi

90 points, Antonio Galloni, Robert Parker's Wine Advocate, Aug 09

A rich yet medium-bodied wine bursting with varietal tropical fruit layered into notes of French oak and minerals. This is one of the few Tuscan Chardonnays that offers exceptional balance and tons of pedigree.

2006 Isole e Olena Toscana Cepparello

92 points, James Suckling, Wine Spectator, 31 Oct 09

Offers rose and citrus fruit notes, with dried cherry and some earth character. Full-bodied, with soft silky tannins and a fruity finish. Refined and racy, like a fine Brunello.

2006 Isole e Olena Cepparello

93 points, Antonio Galloni, Robert Parker's Wine Advocate, Aug 09

Reveals superb density and richness in a surprisingly medium-bodied style for this vintage. Candied red fruit, flowers, menthol and sweet herbs emerge from the glass with almost liqueur-like sweetness. The wine possesses outstanding balance and a long, sweet finish, with subtle notes of tar, liquorice and herbs that make an appearance on the close.

2001 Isole e Olena Vin Santo

93 points, Antonio Galloni, Robert Parker's Wine Advocate, Aug 09

The 2001 Vin Santo del Chianti Classico is a sublime, elegant wine that flows with sweet scents of tobacco, dried figs, honey, flowers and spices. This medium-bodied Vin Santo possesses tons of balance and poise in an elegant, restrained style.

2001 Isole e Olena Vin Santo del Chianti Classico

90 points, James Suckling, Wine Spectator, 31 Oct 09

Aromas of dried fruits, such as pineapple and apricot, lead to a full body in this medium sweet version, which has bright acidity and a lively finish. There's a tangy, sweet-and-sour character on the finish.

2006 Selvapiana Chianti Rufina Riserva Bucerchiale

92 points, Antonio Galloni, Robert Parker's Wine Advocate, Aug 09

Exhibits an attractive combination of ripe, generous fruit wedded to a firm sense of structure that should allow the wine to age gracefully for years. Sweet scents of tobacco, earthiness, leather, liquorice and spices add complexity on the powerful close.

2006 Selvapiana Chianti Rufina Riserva Bucerchiale

90 points, James Suckling, Wine Spectator, 31 Oct 09

Aromas of forest fruit and fresh mushroom follow through to a full body, with silky tannins and a mahogany, berry, bitter chocolate aftertaste.

2006 Selvapiana Fornace

90 points, Antonio Galloni, Robert Parker's Wine Advocate, Aug 09

It is a big, full-bodied offering layered with scents of liquorice, spices and menthol that add complexity to the dark red fruit, all of which is supported by the grip that informs all of the estate's wines.

2007 Petrolo Torrione

94 points, James Suckling, Wine Spectator, 31 Oct 09

Clear and precise, with beautiful aromas of plum, berries and chocolate. Full-bodied and refined, with a dense yet elegant palate of plum, chocolate and cherry. Long and caressing. Wonderfully polished. Very fine.

2006 Petrolo Torrione

90 points, Antonio Galloni, Robert Parker's Wine Advocate, Aug 09

Another in a series of consistently outstanding wines from Petrolo. The generous, soft-textured 2006 Torrione possesses captivating aromatics that meld seamlessly into a palate of ripe red fruit. This beautifully-balanced wine reveals gorgeous inner perfume and tons of balance. It is not to be missed.

2007 Petrolo 'Galatrona'

98 points, James Suckling, Wine Spectator, 31 Oct 09

This has a great colour, with fabulous aromas of crushed blackberry, violet, toasty oak and black olive. Full-bodied with powerful, ripe tannins and amazing flavours of blueberry, dark chocolate and toast. Lasts for minutes on the palate. Reminds me of the 1989 Petrus. A stunning Merlot.

2006 Petrolo Galatrona

95 points, Antonio Galloni, Robert Parker's Wine Advocate, Aug 09

Especially large-scaled in this vintage, with tons of super-ripe dark fruit, new leather, spices and minerals. The Galatrona presents an intriguing combination of soft-textured, generous fruit wedded to sheer power in a sumptuous, full-bodied style. The tannins are present, but the wine's sheer density creates an impression of seamless opulence.

2006 Cantine Leonardo Santo Ippolito

91 points, James Suckling, Wine Spectator, 31 Oct 09

Dark black in colour, offering intense aromas of crushed blackberry and black cherry that follow through to a full body, with big, juicy fruit and a long fruity finish. There's toasty oak and liquorice as well.

2004 Da Vinci Brunello di Montalcino

92 points, James Suckling, Wine Spectator, 31 Oct 09

Sweet berry and plum, with fresh flowers and cigar box undertones. Full-bodied, with super silky tannins and delicious red liquorice, plum tart and cedar on the finish.

2003 Capezzana Vin Santo del Carmignano

94 points, James Suckling, Wine Spectator, 31 Oct 09

Offers wonderful aromas of toffee, apricot pie and lavender honey. Full-bodied and very sweet, with powerful flavours of coffee, syrup and nuts. Big, rich and fresh. A fabulous sweet wine.

2006 Avignonesi Vino Nobile di Montepulciano

90 points, James Suckling, Wine Spectator, 31 Oct 09

Shows ripe strawberry and blackberry on the nose. Full-bodied with plenty of rich, luscious fruit, fine tannins and clean finish. Mouth-wateringly delicious.

2006 Avignonesi Cortona Desiderio

91 points, James Suckling, Wine Spectator, 31 Oct 09

Offers very attractive berry and milk chocolate aromas and flavours. Full-bodied, with soft tannins and a long, flavourful finish. Clean and fruit forward.

1997 Avignonesi Vin Santo di Montepulciano

97 points, Antonio Galloni, Robert Parker's Wine Advocate, Aug 09

A compelling array of toffee, coffee beans, dried figs and liquorice in a full-bodied, totally opulent style. This luxurious, sumptuous wine reveals superb balance and an eternal finish, with closing notes of mocha and espresso that linger on the close.

1997 Avignonesi Vin Santo di Montepulciano

95 points, James Suckling, Wine Spectator, 31 Oct 09

Thick, like eating caramel ice cream topping. Full and vicious, with a very sweet palate and bright, lively acidity.

1997 Avignonesi Vin Santo di Montepulciano 'Occhio di Penice'

91 points, James Suckling, Wine Spectator, 31 Oct 09

Thick and viscous, like chocolate syrup, but much sweeter, with date and prune notes on the nose and palate.

1997 Avignonesi Vin Santo di Montepulciano 'Occhio di Pernice'

98 points, Antonio Galloni, Robert Parker's Wine Advocate, Aug 09

There isn't much to say about the 1997 Vin Santo di Montepulciano 'Occhio di Pernice' except that it is nearly perfect. The wine flows from the bottle with an impenetrable brown coffee-like colour. Sweet mocha, espresso, spice, liquorice and worn-in leather aromas and flavours all meld together in a wine of unusual grace. As usual, the style is opulent and totally full-throttle, yet the wine's balance is superb, with all of the elements in the right place.

2006 Le Pupille Morellino di Scansano Poggio Valente

92 points, Antonio Galloni, Robert Parker's Wine Advocate, Aug 09

Well-articulated aromatics lead to layers of vibrant dark fruit, minerals, liquorice, French oak and new leather. Medium to full in body, the 2006 Poggio Valente possesses considerable energy and precision in a powerful, brooding style that needs a few more years of bottle age to fully emerge.

2006 Le Pupille Saffredi IGT

96 points, Antonio Galloni, Robert Parker's Wine Advocate, Aug 09

This textured, explosive wine boasts considerable depth and richness in its dark fruit, flowers, minerals and graphite. The wine remains extremely primary and in need of considerable bottle age in order to offer its best drinking but it is unquestionably formidable. The style combines elements of power and elegance, achieving a level rarely seen in these parts. Simply put, this is stunning juice.

2006 Le Pupille Saffredi IGT

94 points, James Suckling, Wine Spectator, 31 Oct 09

Displays a lovely nose of flowers, dark fruits and Tuscan rosemary. Full-bodied, with super-silky tannins and gorgeous, refined fruit. Complex and seductive.

2008 Poggio al Tesoro Vermentino Solosole

90 points, James Suckling, Wine Spectator, 31 Oct 09

Grapefruit and lemon peel aromas follow through to a full body with lively fruit and acidity. Very flavourful.

2006 Poggio Al Tesoro Mediterra

90 points, Antonio Galloni, Robert Parker's Wine Advocate, Aug 09

The wine possesses awesome clarity in its dark fruit, flowers, graphite and grilled herbs, with a long, powerful finish. This delicious Tuscan wine offers incredible value.

2006 Poggio Al Tesoro Sondraia

92 points, Antonio Galloni, Robert Parker's Wine Advocate, Aug 09

A soft, plush wine packed with dark fruit, new leather, spices and liquorice. It is a classic expression of Bolgheri that captures all of the qualities that make reds from this Tuscan appellation so irresistible; namely generous fruit and a warm, harmonious personality.

2006 Poggio al Tesoro Dedicato a Walter

94 points, James Suckling, Wine Spectator, 31 Oct 09

Dark ruby in colour, with sweet herbs, tea and dark berries on the nose. Full-bodied, with loads of fruit and chewy, polished tannins. This is a big, powerful wine with a deep core of fruit and excellent structure.

2006 Poggio Al Tesoro Dedicato A Walter

92+ points, Antonio Galloni, Robert Parker's Wine Advocate, Aug 09

A massive offering packed with ripe, dark fruit. Today the wine is incredibly dense and fruit-driven, with little of the aromatic complexity that makes Cabernet Franc in Maremma so compelling.

2008 Gran Sasso Montepulciano D'Abruzzo

4 stars, Christmas Recommendations, Decanter, January 2010

Smooth, dark, rich and creamy, this smells and tastes like it costs more than it does: juicy bramble fruit, grippy tannins and a lovely fresh finish.

2008 Villa Tonino Inzolia

'BEST BUYS' Top Two Whites, Claire Hu, Harpers, 21 Aug 09

Clean nose, more complexity and depth on the palate than others, melons, apples, citrus and a hint of minerality.

NEW ZEALAND

2007 Wild Earth Pinot Noir

James Goodall, Food & Wine, Dec 09

Light red with vibrant red-berry fruit and violets on the nose. A full-bodied, pinot noir with layers of rich brambly fruit, a touch of spice and smooth ripe tannins caressing the palate. Round and velvety smooth with long finish.

2007 Wild Earth Pinot Noir

92 points, Neal Martin, Robert Parker's Wine Advocate, Sep 09

The 2007 Pinot Noir has a refined nose with a more red fruit profile: redcurrant, maraschino and raspberry. Good definition although it is a little closed compared to others. The palate has very fine tannins, fleshy and very well balanced with wild strawberry, raspberry and a touch of sous-bois. Very refined and elegant on the finish. Feminine and wily. Another great wine from the award-winning Wild Earth.

2008 Tinpot Hut Marlborough Pinot Noir

Wines of the Month, Decanter, Dec 09

You should know what to expect with a good Marlborough Pinot Noir and this more than ticks all the boxes. Still supremely youthful, it is juicy and expressive with a nose packed with crushed, red fruit. These primary notes also form the basis of the palate which is delicate, yet tasty.

SPAIN

2005 Orben Rioja

90 points, Thomas Matthews, Wine Spectator, 15 Nov 09

This chewy red shows impressive concentration, with black cherry, blackberry, and cassis flavours backed by leaf, mineral and toast notes. Fruit-centred, balanced and clean.

2006 Finca Villacreces Ribera del Duero

90 points, Thomas Matthews, Wine Spectator, 15 Nov 09

This sleek red shows cranberry, cherry, tobacco and orange peel notes over firm tannins. Lively and expressive, with bright floral finish.

2006 Las Rocas, Garnacha, Calatayud

Red wine of the week, www.decanter.com, 30 Nov 09

Really good value, showing a character and sense of place that is sometimes lacking in wines at this price. Blessed with purplish, vibrant fruit with nice touches of lavender, it's a crisp, bright glass of wine with peppery flecks on the palate.

SOUTH AFRICA

2008 Goats do Roam White

Christmas Recommendations, Decanter, Jan 10

One of South Africa's most recognisable wine brands, this mixes populist appeal with quality: inviting smoke, tropical fruit, honey and minerals.

USA

2006 Seghesio Home Ranch Zinfandel, Alexander Valley

Top 10 Wines: Decanter Fine Wine Encounter 2009, www.decanter.com, Nov 09

From one of the world's best Zinfandel producers comes this beautiful red cherry flavoured wine. It's packed with spicy and leathery nuances, is complex, and shows marked acidity.