



## The Amateur Gastronomer

In search of the best wine, food and culture

### It's Time for Wine: Irresistible Wines (So Far) This Season

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*By Monty and Sara Preiser*

It has been a while since we have written about particular California wines, but we have been so impressed with a number of them this summer that (we know you cannot wait) today is the day. The beauties we will write about below are some of those we highly and without reservation recommend for you.



We believe all of these wines, regardless of the cost, are fairly priced. Everyone's budget is different as to what s/he can afford, of course, but it is always comforting to know that at least someone (for the wines below, anyway, it is us) approves of the quality to cost ratio being asked when you make a purchase. Stay tuned for some more great recommendations as we move through the summer and fall.

#### **Cabernet Sauvignon**

**2007 Bressler** (\$85): 2007 is uniformly praised as a superb year for Napa Cabs. The reason might well be the balance that has been achieved to satisfy the desires of many modern enophiles. The fruit, while concentrated and dark, is not so ripe that it interferes with the many nuanced and identifiable layers on the palate. Thus, we find beautifully integrated wines, and the Bressler is a true representation of what the best offers.

**2008 Gargiulo "G Major 7" 575 OVX Vineyards** (\$125): Substantially a Cab, a healthy dose (about 11%) of Cab Franc and touches of Petit Verdot and Malbec give this wine sophistication, balance, and structure. We found that the charcoal nose effortlessly dovetailed into a violet, juicy plum palate, and then to a dusty finish reminiscent of the fruit's Oakville home.

**2008 Gargiulo “575 OVX”** (\$190): 100% Cab from a single vineyard, this wine helps prove why Napa produces some of the world’s best (and its price reflects such recognition by its owners and buyers). The layers of cassis, cranapple, and blueberries are easily distinguishable as they fill the mouth at first sip and sail toward the cocoa finish. Kept together by bold, yet approachable, tannins, this is a wine worthy of its price.

**2007 Page Wine Cellars “The Stash”** (\$100): Here is what you look for in a big Cabernet Sauvignon – a luscious nose, gorgeous deep blue fruit up front, some smoke and structure throughout the mid palate, and a strong/long purple finish. The three varietals used (90% Cab Sauv, 5% Cab Franc, and 5% Petit Verdot) are noticeable as they come into play at every layer.

**2007 Provenance “Beckstoffer To Kalon”** (\$75): While marriage is usually for two, this marvelous wine comes about from the confluence of three formidable factors – the always amazing vineyards of Andy Beckstoffer, the terroir of the To Kalon vineyard, and the handiwork of winemaker Tom Rinaldi. 07 was a great year, and this is simply a great wine.

**2007 Tayson Pierce** (\$65): Not yet released but available on the winery’s Website, we think you should consider obtaining some of this gem before this relatively new and still under-the-radar wine becomes a hot commodity – something inevitable with this quality and at this price. All the right fruits are in line and layered, the tannins are obvious yet integrated, and the smoothness throughout the palate is complimented by a silky long finish.

## Chardonnay

**2008 Ferrari-Carano “Tre Terre” Russian River Valley** (\$30): This one took us back a few years and reminded us that good acidity, tropical flavors, creamy butter on the palate, and a balanced helping of oak on the finish was, and still is, a recipe for an excellent Chard.

**2009 Papapietro Perry “Peters Vineyard” Russian River Valley** (\$49): Wine writers and critics are praising the 2009 Chardonnays of Sonoma, and this one is a leader of the pack. Rich from the first sip, beautifully balanced, and possessing a tapered finish with more than a nuance of “butter,” this is a perfect match for crab and lobster.

**2009 Wren Hop Vineyards “Shipwreck Savior” Sonoma Coast** (\$42): Apples, figs, and lovely minerality surround a huge bodied wine with the kind of balance between oak, fruit, and acidity that we miss in so many Chardonnays today. Creaminess and a touch of butter linger on your palate long after you have taken your last sip.

## Marsanne

**2009 Tallulah “Como”** (\$28): Though not yet a household varietal in the U.S., the Rhone grape Marsanne is increasing in popularity due to its full body, smooth mouth-feel, and usual flavor of honeysuckle with some nutty overtones. Tallulah’s entry into the field is more than welcome as the “Como” reflects all the above descriptors and more. Drink it with most any type of light dish.

## Petit Verdot

**2007 Truchard** (\$35): We have to spend time searching out good stand-alone Petit Verdots as they are few and far between. While the always superior fruit from the Truchard family vineyards displays black cherry, cranberry, and baking spices, this well structured wine is available only to winery club

members. We recommend checking that out (should not be a problem or an inconvenience – all the Truchard wines are wonderful).

## Petite Sirah

**2006 and 2007 David Fulton** (\$45): There is nothing at all that is in any way small about these Petites. We include them both here because there are only a few cases of HALF BOTTLES of 2006 left, and at \$23 you should run to your check book and order some. The 06 is characterized by depth, leather box notes, and “masculinity,” while the 07 is what some call more “feminine” with its elegant fruit, smooth tannins, and lightly spiced red fruit at the end. We bought them both.

## Pinot Meunier

**2009 Chandon Carneros** (\$35): One of the more surprising finds for us in many years, this bright and flavorful wine starts with a nose of cranberries, moves to cola nuts on the mid palate, shows off a satiny body, and leaves you satisfied with deep plums on the finish. It might go with every grilled meat or veggie we can imagine.

## Pinot Noir

**2008 Coho “Stanly Ranch Carneros”** (\$45): A juicy and complex Pinot that shows Carneros’ characteristically pleasant nuances of smoke surrounded throughout by spice and red plums. Just as you think it is only very, very good, along comes an earthy finish that pushes this Pinot to great.

**2008 Donum Estate Russian River** (\$65): We would have written about the Donum 2008 West Slope, but it is already sold out. A bit less expensive, but with incredible depth, a nucleus of black cherries, weight, and a forest floor/mushroom finish, this Estate Russian River Pinot hardly takes a back seat to any other.

**2009 Frostwatch Bennett Valley** (\$38): Here is a shocker – a terrific Sonoma Pinot from an appellation other than Carneros or Russian River. Bret Raven only made 20 cases this year in his first foray into this varietal, and we own 1/40 of them (could not resist the quality plus price). Watch for this under the radar wine in 09.

**2008 Papapietro Perry “Peters Vineyard” Russian River Valley** (\$54): Cherry aromas give way to dark fruit, toast, and spice on the mid-palate, which are joined by a touch of rhubarb and earthy flavors at the finish. This is a full wine with outstanding structure and balance.

**2008 Papapietro Perry “777 Clones” Russian River Valley** (\$70): Using only one clone from many of its best vineyards, the team at Papapietro Perry was inspired on this one. Berries on the nose, great acidity and balance throughout, dark cherries toward the finish, and smooth tannins, are all influenced by various exotic spices. This wine should last a long while.

## Red Blends

**2008 Jessup “Table for Four”** (\$79): When the combination of about 60% Cab and nearly equal parts Petite Sirah, Cab Franc, and Merlot are right – folks, they are just right. This wine offers a big, velvet mouthful of black fruit, a kiss of smoke, wonderful acidity, and a brier-like, leather-like finish as a result of the superb Petite Sirah.

**2007 Signorello “Padrone”** (\$125): Both black and red fruit are immediately apparent here, but it is the stunning cassis and black cherry juice on a velvety mid-palate that begins to make this wine something special. And even if you aren’t sure by then that the Padrone is in a rarefied class, the finish begins to fade normally, but somehow returns for a long run.

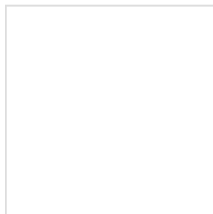
## Sauvignon Blanc

**2010 Provenance** (\$28): Year in and year out no one produces a Sauvignon Blanc (SB in wine country parlance) that is more compatible with food than does Tom Rinaldi. Blended with a little Semillon and aged on the lees for a creamy mouth-feel, the wine also sees some barrel in order to round out the finish – a style of which we are particularly fond.

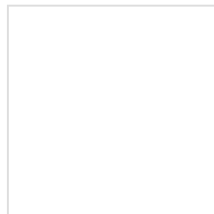
*It’s Time for Wine* is a column published by wine writers and educators Monty and Sara Preiser that is featured on the *Amateur Gastronomer*.

Monty and Sara Preiser reside full time in Palm Beach County, Florida, and spend their summers visiting wineries and studying wines on the west coast where they have a home in Napa. For many years they were the wine columnists for *The Boca Raton News*, have served as contributors to the *South Florida Business Journal*, and are now the principal wine writers for [Sallys-Place.com](http://Sallys-Place.com). Monty and Sara also publish *The Preiser Key to Napa Valley*, the most comprehensive guide to wineries and restaurants in the Napa Valley, published every March, July, and November. [Click here](#) to read more columns by the Preisers.

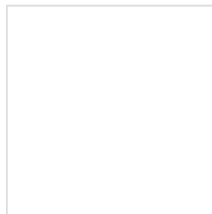
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