

Wine Spectator Insider

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CALIFORNIA SPARKLING WINES FROM THE LIKES OF MUMM NAPA, Roederer and Schramsberg mingle with classic Sonoma Chardonnays and assorted reds. There are plenty of single-vineyard bottlings in the mix.

Washington wines, however, dominate this week's *Wine Spectator Insider*, with the bottlings of Charles Smith showing especially well. The former rock music promoter made 13 of the 38 wines in this report, both under his namesake label and K Vintners. Eight classic-rated American reds and whites can be found here, with six of the best, the Hot Wines, on page 4.

CALIFORNIA

ALBAN

Grenache Edna Valley Alban Estate Vineyard 2007
94 points | \$94 | 300 cases made | Red

Dense, rich and meaty, this is full-throttle and rustic, with tiers of chewy blackberry, wild berry, loamy earth, ginger bread, underbrush, sage, cedar, tobacco and black licorice flavors. Ends with firm, chewy tannins. Drink now through 2022.—*J.L.*

ALBAN

Syrah Edna Valley Alban Estate Reva 2007
94 points | \$94 | 1,200 cases made | Red

Fresh, intense and vivid, with zesty wild berry, blackberry, cherry and kirsch. Full-bodied, firming nicely, with tannins that provide traction and dimension. Best from 2014 through 2024.—*J.L.*

LITTORAI

Chardonnay Sonoma Coast Charles Heintz Vineyard 2009
94 points | \$60 | 239 cases made | White

Serves up a complex range of ripe pear, tangerine, nectarine, cedar, green fig and green apple delivered on a laser beam. Crisp, clean and refreshingly complex, with a finish that sails on and on. Best from 2012 through 2020.—*J.L.*

MUMM NAPA

DVX Napa Valley 2003
93 points | \$55 | 1,000 cases made | Sparkling

Sleek and elegant, with apple blossom and spiced ginger aromas that lead to rich yet delicate flavors of baked pear and crème brûlée, mixed with crisp citrus. Finishes with a vibrant, mineral-laced acidity. Drink now through 2016.—*T.F.*

ROCHIOLI

Chardonnay Russian River Valley 2009
93 points | \$38 | 2,327 cases made | White

Ripe and expressive, with a range of baked apple, ripe pear, spice, nutmeg, mint and mineral. Full-bodied, ending with a long, persistent finish that echoes a pithy grapefruit aftertaste. Drink now through 2017.—*J.L.*

ROEDERER ESTATE

Brut Anderson Valley L'Ermitage 2003
93 points | \$45 | 5,251 cases made | Sparkling

Elegant and sleek, yet complex, with cinnamon and green apple aromas that lead to rich flavors of pear and lemon custard layered with brioche and mineral. Drink now through 2015.—*T.F.*

SCHRAMSBERG

J. Schram North Coast 2004
93 points | \$100 | 941 cases made | Sparkling

Rich and well-structured, exhibiting bold aromas of tart apple and cinnamon rolls, with layered flavors of baked Asian pear, ginger and toasty spice that linger toward the crisp finish. Drink now through 2013.—*T.F.*

SHAFFER

Chardonnay Napa Valley Carneros Red Shoulder Ranch 2009
93 points | \$48 | 6,000 cases made | White

Pure, ripe and richly flavored, with tiers of nectarine, fig, honey-suckle and smoky oak. Full-bodied, with touches of citrus blossom and lemon peel. Drink now through 2017.—*J.L.*

WASHINGTON

GORMAN

Cabernet Sauvignon-Petit Verdot Red Mountain The Albatross 2008
95 points | \$80 | 150 cases made | Red

Vivid and broad, delivering a vibrant mouthful of berry, cherry, mulberry, red chile pepper and tangy spices on an open-textured frame. The finish sings a whole chorus. This has depth, persistence and charm. Best from 2013 through 2020.—*H.S.*

K

Roma En Chamberlin Walla Walla Valley 2008
95 points | \$50 | 190 cases made | Red

Polished, supple and silky in texture, with a distinctive black olive note coursing through the ripe plum, currant and crushed stone flavors, mingling effectively on the persistent finish. Shows stature, depth and finesse to go with its power. Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah. Drink now through 2018.—*H.S.*

FIDELITAS

Red Mountain Vineyard Red Mountain 2008
94 points | \$50 | 241 cases made | Red

Supple, generous and relatively light on its feet, dancing with red berry, watermelon and rhubarb flavors, remaining ripe and focused through the long, deftly balanced finish. This has wonderful intensity and grace. Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot. Drink now through 2018.—*H.S.*

K

Ovide En Cerise Walla Walla Valley 2008
94 points | \$50 | 215 cases made | Red

Rich and generous, with a strong mineral element adding depth to the cherry, cinnamon and dark berry flavors. This has floral and wet earth overtones that make the finish complex, with depth and impressive length. Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah. Drink now through 2018.—*H.S.*

K

Syrah Wahluke Slope The Deal Sundance Vineyard 2008
94 points | \$35 | 235 cases made | Red

Soft and meaty, with rich black olive and savory spice overtones to the plum and blackberry fruit, finishing poised and intense, with well-concealed power driving the long, expressive finish. Drink now through 2018.—*H.S.*

K

Syrah Walla Walla Valley Phil Lane 2008
94 points | \$70 | 70 cases made | Red

Velvety, plush and generous with its sassafras-accented blackberry, fresh currant and black olive flavors, coursing smoothly into the long, vivid finish. This has the poise and intensity to last. Best from 2013 through 2018.—*H.S.*

K

The Creator Washington 2008
94 points | \$50 | 665 cases made | Red

Muscular and powerful, brimming with ripe currant, blackberry, blueberry and meat flavors, yet graceful enough to do a pirouette as this spins into the finish. Lingers effortlessly as the flavors keep blasting away against polished tannins. Needs time only to tame the ebullience. Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah. Best from 2014 through 2020.—*H.S.*

OWEN ROE

Cabernet Sauvignon Yakima Valley Red Willow Vineyard 1973 Block 2008
94 points | \$72 | 193 cases made | Red

Supple and inviting, with ripe blackberry and blueberry fruit coursing through a layer of cedar and sassafras, lingering enticingly against refined tannins. A graceful wine that should reward cellaring. Drink now through 2018.—*H.S.*

FIGGINS

Walla Walla Valley 2008
93 points | \$85 | 831 cases made | Red

Broad and generous, offering a supple mouthful of mineral-accented blackberry, cherry and mint flavors, mingling effectively on the polished finish. Offers depth and refinement. Cabernet Sauvignon, Petit Verdot and Merlot. Drink now through 2018.—*H.S.*

GORMAN

Cabernet Sauvignon Red Mountain The Bully 2008
93 points | \$45 | 600 cases made | Red

Soft and ripe, with an open feel to the sassafras-accented blackberry and currant fruit. The ripe flavors linger persistently on the gentle finish. Drink now through 2018.—*H.S.*

GRAND RÊVE

Ciel Du Cheval Vineyard Collaboration Series I Red Mountain 2007
93 points | \$55 | 200 cases made | Red

Firm in texture, this is chewy with broad tannins and nicely balanced with generous currant, plum, and blackberry fruit, all of it finishing with refinement and an intriguing tension. Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Petit Verdot and Merlot. Best from 2013 through 2018.—*H.S.*

K

Syrah Wahluke Slope Northridge 2008
93 points | \$35 | 280 cases made | Red

Polished, generous and appealing for its gorgeous raspberry, blueberry and Santa Rosa plum fruit, nicely tinged with espresso and crème fraîche notes, gaining tempo on the racy finish. Drink now through 2016.—*H.S.*

SLEIGHT OF HAND

The Archimage Columbia Valley 2008
93 points | \$45 | 222 cases made | Red

Supple, generous and round, offering a silky mouthful of currant, blackberry, cola and spice flavors that balance deftly and linger effortlessly. Graceful and appealing, this can also last in the cellar. Merlot, Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon. Drink now through 2018.—*H.S.*

SPRING VALLEY

Frederick Walla Walla Valley 2008
93 points | \$50 | 1,150 cases made | Red

Dense and juicy, this is packed with disarmingly delicious currant, plum, roasted meat and mineral flavors, and when the finish kicks in this shows elegance and finesse. Offers power and personality, with deft balance. Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Petit Verdot and Malbec. Best from 2014 through 2020.—*H.S.*

21 GRAMS

Walla Walla Valley 2008
92 points | \$125 | 116 cases made | Red

Dark, dense and distinctive for its tart-edged cherry, currant, floral and meaty flavors, persisting intensely on the long, inviting finish. Needs time to come together. Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Petit Verdot. Best from 2013 through 2018.—*H.S.*

ADAMS BENCH

Cabernet Sauvignon Columbia Valley The V 2008
92 points | \$49 | 249 cases made | Red

This has density, depth and focus, without excess weight, delivering a juicy mouthful of plum and currant fruit shaded with savory spices and bay leaf. Finishes with persistence. Best from 2013 through 2018.—*H.S.*

FIDELITAS

Cabernet Sauvignon Horse Heaven Hills Champoux Vineyard 2008
92 points | \$60 | 411 cases made | Red

Makes a splash with the first sip, offering gorgeous currant and blackberry flavors, hinting at coffee and cream before the finish recedes. This has polish and refinement. Drink now through 2015.—*H.S.*

FIDELITAS

Cabernet Sauvignon Red Mountain Ciel du Cheval Vineyard 2008
92 points | \$55 | 240 cases made | Red

Broad and generous, with a welcome transparency to the black cherry, red currant, cedar and cinnamon flavors, playing against refined tannins on the long, savory finish. Best from 2013 through 2016.—*H.S.*

JM

Cabernet Sauvignon Red Mountain 2008
92 points | \$38 | 300 cases made | Red

Supple and round, with just a hint of sandy tannin texture around a satiny core of blackberry, blueberry and licorice flavors, lingering effectively on the well-proportioned finish. Best from 2013 through 2018.—*H.S.*

K

Syrah Wahluke Slope Clifton 2008
92 points | \$35 | 210 cases made | Red

Polished, focused and refined, offering a supple mouthful of blackberry, green olive, sage and smoke flavors, mingling effectively as the finish sails on against well-buffed tannins. Drink now through 2016.—*H.S.*

K

Syrah Wahluke Slope Pheasant Vineyard 2008
92 points | \$45 | 190 cases made | Red

Polished, focused and dense, with blackberry, black cherry, licorice and black pepper flavors, finishing with black olive character. Shows length and vivacity. Drink now through 2018.—*H.S.*

K

The Boy Walla Walla Valley 2008
92 points | \$50 | 315 cases made | Red

On the lighter side, but dense with tar, black olive and rose scents around a core of dark berry and cherry fruit, smoothing out nicely on the extensive finish. Grenache and Syrah. Drink now through 2015.—*H.S.*

K

El Jefe En Chamberlin Walla Walla Valley 2008
91 points | \$50 | 135 cases made | Red

Ripe and dark, with smoky plum and black olive flavors on a polished frame, lingering gently after the muscular start. Offers depth and persistence. Tempranillo and Cabernet Sauvignon. Drink now through 2014.—*H.S.*

K

Syrah Washington Motor City Kitty 2008
91 points | \$35 | 220 cases made | Red

Firm in texture, this is lighter in weight than many versions, with dark berry and smoke flavors prominent, finishing with a tarry note. Needs time to flesh out. Best from 2013 through 2018.—*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.

CHARLES SMITH

Syrah Columbia Valley Royal City Stoneridge Vineyard 2008
96 points | \$140 | 600 cases made | Red

Savory, with layers and layers of flavor on a deftly balanced frame. The velvety style emphasizes black olive, green olive and roasted meat flavors around a subterranean core of blackberry, tar and spice. The finish rolls along unimpeded by polished tannins. Drink now through 2018. *From Washington.—H.S.*

K

Syrah Walla Walla Valley Morrison Lane 2008
95 points | \$45 | 265 cases made | Red

Supple in texture, with a beguiling purity to the black currant, plum and savory spice flavors, offering hints of coffee and molasses as the finish lingers and lingers. This has poise and tremendous presence. Drink now through 2020. *From Washington.—H.S.*

KISTLER

Chardonnay Sonoma Coast Parmelee-Hill Vineyard Stone Flat 2008
95 points | \$75 | 891 cases made | White

Intense, with rich layers of smoky oak, ripe fig, melon and roasted marshmallow. Full-bodied, with touches of nutmeg, anise and roasted fig. All in all very complex and distinctive. Drink now through 2017. *From California.—J.L.*

LITTORAI

Chardonnay Russian River Valley Mays Canyon 2009
95 points | \$60 | 210 cases made | White

A stylish wine that serves up a wide range of aromas, including ripe honeysuckle, orchard fruit, spice, pear and melon. Firm and textured, gaining persistence while remaining delicate and elegant. Drink now through 2017. *From California.—J.L.*

RASA

Creative Impulse DuBrul Vineyard Yakima Valley 2008
95 points | \$95 | 140 cases made | Red

Lithe, supple and full of personality, with floral, green tea and soy sauce overtones adding zip and depth to the disarmingly lovely plum and currant fruit. The finish lingers easily against well-buffed tannins. Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot. Best from 2013 through 2020. *From Washington.—H.S.*

SLEIGHT OF HAND

Cabernet Sauvignon Columbia Valley The Illusionist 2008
95 points | \$45 | 322 cases made | Red

Supple, almost satiny, with gorgeous cherry, raspberry and rhu-barb flavors mingling with hints of clove and rose as the finish sails on and on. Offers impressive depth and length. Drink now through 2018. *From Washington.—H.S.*

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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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