

The Successful Collector – By Julian Hitner

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~ Master of Wine 2007 Claret Tasting – beyond expectations ~
Saturday, January 7th, 2012

The way wine tastings should be:

Imagine a tasting where you can taste all of the First Growths (including d'Yquem), where you can meet some of the most famous wine writers in the world, where you have ample time (instead of a few paltry hours) to properly taste, where you can pour all of your own wine. Such, in its most basic summarization, was the way in which the Master of Wine Annual Claret Tasting was organized, with yours truly on hand to examine wines from some of the greatest estates in Bordeaux.



Held at the unapologetically pretentious—yet appropriately furnished—Vintners' Hall, located very close to the Millennium Bridge in London (at 68 Upper Thames Street to be precise), this year's claret examination featured the wines of the 2007 vintage. Not exactly the most celebrated year, as well as ridiculously overpriced, it goes without saying that some wines were better than others. Almost always the case, is it not?

Indeed, as most collectors are now probably fully aware, while many dry whites and stickies were indisputably well made, the 2007 vintage was not a great year for reds in Bordeaux. Truly, while the best of the bunch were unquestionably well made and delivering everything expected in terms of proper aromatics, finesse, and charm, such wines have continued to demonstrate a lack of overall structure, density, and poise. In short, many reds from 2007, the best examples generally fully ripe and sometimes quite supple, are light.

Nonetheless, as this tasting was essentially an examination of the best of the best, there remained plenty of standouts. The best of the First Growths, for



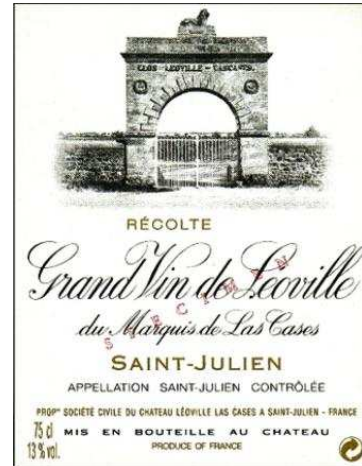
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instance? Opinions seemed to vary from taster to taster; but most seemed to agree that Châteaux Margaux and Haut-Brion stood marginally above the rest. For my part, I was most pleased with Château Lafite, which simply seemed to deliver more in the way of substance than the others.

Other highlights from the Left Bank, most of which were auspiciously better than their counterparts on the Right? In Margaux, the Palmer was outstanding, boasting terrific finesse, posture, and depth. In St-Julien, the Léoville-Las Cases was even better, displaying tremendous focus, pedigree, and First-Growth opulence; while the Léoville Barton was definitely a close second: more fragrant, lighter, and very refined. In Pauillac, after



Mouton, Pichon-Baron was not to be missed: superbly evolved, brilliantly structured, and elegant;



Châteaux Duhart-Milon and Lynch-Bages were both also very good. As for St-Estèphe, only the two Second Growths really passed mustard; the Cos d'Estournel both opulent and round; the Montrose just as refined yet more cautious and reserved.

In Pessac-Léognan, La Mission was the wine of the appellation, not as overtly pristine and magnificent as its neighbour across the street, nonetheless stupendously polished, balanced, and characterful. Another notable was Pape Clément: modernistic, quite rich yet unfailingly elegant and inviting. A real shame there were no dry whites to sample, however. Over the past few years, the top estates from 2007 have shown remarkably well.

Next, we shift gears to St-Emilion and Pomerol. As mentioned ago, 2007 was not nearly as kind to the Right Bank as it was to the Left. In St-Emilion, Château Figeac was the clear winner, along with Canon-la-Gaffelière; the former more elegant yet velvety, the latter extremely rich (in

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context of the vintage) and generous. In all, however, compared to the Cabernet Sauvignon-dominant wines of the Left Bank, Right Bank Merlot-dominant blends seem to have turned out rather clumsy, overall. My advice: stick with only the top names.

Finally, we come to the stickies of Sauternes. Make no mistake: Château d'Yquem was not one the greatest wine of the appellation; it was also the greatest wine of the Master of Wine tasting, stunningly intense, exuberant, and capable of lasting for aging. Easily the best d'Yquem since



2001. As for the rest, quality was uniformly high, with Châteaux Climens and Lafaurie-Peyraguey taking top honours.

A clearly wonderful tasting, with the best wines performing, more or less, as they should. Just don't expect the reds to taste as if they came from a legendary vintage. We've already had enough of those, as of late ...

[Click here for a few gems from the 7 January 2012 Vintages Release along with several others](#)

A few gems for collectors:

White Wines:

Domaine Zind Humbrecht 2008 Heimbouurg Riesling, Alsace AOC, France: For those who are curious, the small Turckheim-situated Heimbouurg vineyard is located just to the west of Colmar, with Zind Humbrecht taking full advantage of its opulent properties. Starbright, light yellow-lime in colour, the 2008 Riesling features gloriously intense scents of 'icy' lemon blossom, lime, ginger, pineapple, minerals, kerosene, buttercups, orange zest, and spice. Very complex, with heavenly vibrancy of fruit, balanced acidity, and a wonderful, cacophony-like hint of minerally lemon, orange zest, and spice on the finish. Alsatian offering of magnificent complexity, agility, and purity. Now-2022++. (Julian Hitner, *The Successful Collector*, November 2011)

93 \$47.00 (#218578) Vintages Online Exclusives

Domaine Grand Veneur 2009 La Fontaine, Châteauneuf-du-Pape AOC, Rhône, France: An extraordinary treat whenever I come across a white Châteauneuf crafted from 100% Roussanne (Marsanne is forbidden in the appellation), the 2009 La Fontaine is an exquisitely elegant bottling that collectors would be foolish to shy away from. Starbright, pale-light lime in colour, its offers amazingly intense scents of honeyed white flowers, powerful orange zest, lemon candy drops, apricots, white chalk, and spice. Very complex, with marvellous, characterful fruit, polished acidity, and a lingering, assertive hint of white flowers and poached pears on the finish. Lots of strength at 14.5% alcohol,

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still exceedingly well integrated. Now-2025++. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, November 2011)

92++ \$65.00 (#241471) Vintages Online Exclusives

Forman 2008 Chardonnay, Napa Valley, California: Though best known for its superb Cabernet Sauvignon-dominated reds, proprietor Ric Forman seems to have little difficulty crafting first-rate Chardonnay, as well. Starbright, light greenish-lime in colour, the '08 comes across as surprisingly delicate, offering lovely nuances of bright lemony pears, green apples, dried apricots, light nuts, caramel, and a hint of quince. Complex, with beautiful fruit, balanced, polished acidity, and a refined hint of pears and subtle caramel on the finish. Superbly interwoven, even elegant; also noteworthy is the fact that this beauty logs in at only 13.8% alcohol. Now-2017++. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, August 2011)

90++ \$49.95 (#236117) Vintages 17 September 2011 Release

Laguna Ranch 2008 Chardonnay, Russian River Valley (Sonoma County): From one of the greatest winegrowing regions in California for premium Chardonnay comes the superlative 2008 Laguna Ranch. Starbright, light greenish-lime in colour, it is finely toasted, with beautiful, Burgundian-inspired scents of quince, pears, dried butterscotch, orange blossom, apricots, and a hint of vanilla and (even) lime wedges. Complex, possessing caressing, flavourful fruit, balanced acidity, and a refined hint of pears, quince, and toasted oak on the finish. Extremely impressive, full-bodied, and stylish. My first note from this winery, I believe. Now-2017. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, December 2011)

90 \$32.95 (#544981) Vintages 7 January 2012 Release

Clairault 2008 Estate Chardonnay, Margaret River, Western Australia, Australia: In the past, I must confess to never really having been genuinely impressed by the offerings from Clairault; but the 2008 Estate Chardonnay has forced me to re-evaluate such a stance. Starbright, light lime in colour, the wine displays elegant scents of slightly flowery pears, apricots, lemon blossom, light quince, orange zest, and a hint of caramel and lime. Complex, with refined, intriguingly velvety fruit, balanced acidity, and a stylish, attractive hint of pistachio-lined lemon and pears on the finish. Truly impressive, warm, and characterful. Now-2017. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, August 2011)

90+ \$39.95 (#246892) Vintages 17 September 2011 Release

Schloss Reinhartshausen 2009 Riesling Kabinett, QmP Hattenheimer Wisselbrunnen, Rheingau, Germany: Over the past year, I must confess to having grown rather fond of this first-rate operation. Starbright, pale lime in colour, the '09 Riesling Kabinett, hailing from the Hattenheimer Wisselbrunnen vineyard, displays lovely, delicate scents of ethereal white peaches, green grapes, tangerine peel, kerosene, lemon blossom, and spice. Fairly complex, with fine fruit, balanced acidity, and a refined hint of white peach blossom and tangerine peel on the finish. Splendid, properly formatted, and elegant; fully 'German' in style. Now-2016++. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, July 2011)

88+ \$17.95 (#114801) Vintages 20 August 2011 Release

Domaine Bonnard 2009, Sancerre AOC, Loire, France: It feels like forever since I've recommended a Sancerre for 'value,' a highly subjective term in wine evaluation no

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matter which way you look at it. Starbright, very pale lime in colour, the 2009 Domaine Bonnard exhibits lovely, refreshingly delicate scents of gooseberries, white grapefruit, minerals, and a pinch of green apples and lemon. On the palate: good, nervy fruit on display, with balanced acidity, and a dry, delightful hint of lemony gooseberries and flint on the finish. Well formed, balanced, and refreshing. Now-2014+. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, December 2011)

88 \$21.95 (#140525) Vintages 7 January 2012 Release

Domaine Carrette 2009 Chardonnay, Pouilly-Fuissé AOC, Burgundy, France: Easily one of the better, less cheap oak-drenched Pouilly-Fuissés to come my way, the 2009 Domaine Carrette is a pleasing, well-focused, and balanced Chardonnay. Starbright, pale-light lime in colour, it is finely toasted, with well-integrated, delightful notes of lemony pears, delicate caramel, sherbet, apricots, yellow plums, and a hint of orange zest. Mouthfeel: good fruit showing, paired with balanced acidity, and a lovely hint of lemon citrus and pears (marked by dried apricots) on the finish. Neatly done. Now-2016. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, December 2011)

88 \$21.95 (#264481) Vintages 7 January 2012 Release

Caves des Producteurs de Vouvray 2008 Les Fosses d'Hareng, Vouvray AOC, Loire, France: A grape that some enthusiasts have trouble coming to terms with, Chenin Blanc arguably assumes one of its best forms when sourced from the Vouvray appellation. Starbright, pale straw-lime in colour, the '08 Les Fosses d'Hareng reveals lovely scents of freshly cut hay, lemon, green apples, white flowers, and an intriguing hint of seasalt. On the palate: appealing fruit on display, with balanced acidity, and a delightful hint of dewy spring flowers, hay, and green apples on the finish. A splendid offering, in the end. Now-2016+. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, July 2011)

88 \$17.95 (#224287) Vintages 3 September 2011 Release

Domaine Nigri 2008 Réserve de Domaine, Jurançon Sec AOC, Southwest, France: Call it a hunch, but I have the funniest feeling this wine shall be met with mixed reactions by enthusiasts, as it is partially oxidized, which can be considered a fault—personally, I think it, albeit paradoxically, enhances its personality. Starbright, light straw in colour with a touch of lime, it displays lovely scents of fresh almond-laced lemon, switching to lanolin, white flowers, nectarines, and a hint of yellow plums and spice. Palate: delightful dry fruit, balanced acidity, and a slightly oxidative yet pleasant hint of lemon and white flowers on the finish. Sincerely enjoyable, if you ask me. Now-2015. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, December 2011)

88 \$19.95 (#255026) Vintages 7 January 2012 Release

Domaine Saint Rémy 2009 Réserve Pinot Gris, Alsace AOC, France: Though somewhat straightforward, the 2009 Réserve Pinot Gris is nonetheless a very fine, clearly Alsatian wine with good balance, varietal identity, and flavour profile. Starbright, pale-light straw in colour, it offers lovely scents of straw-laden peaches, nectarine peel, wet stones, and the tiniest traces of jasmine and Asian spice. Palate: delightful fruit orientation, with balanced acidity, and a pleasant hint of straw-infused peaches on the finish. A good, splendid drop. Now-2016. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, December 2011)

88 \$18.95 (#16410) Vintages 7 January 2012 Release

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Red Wines:

Château Pontet-Canet 2006, Pauillac AOC, Bordeaux, France: Reviewing other recent notes, from other vintages, of this fabulous estate, I sound like a broken record—I keep going on about how magnificent the wines of Pontet-Canet have become. Brilliant, dark-opaque ruby in colour, the '06 is beautifully toasted, offering wonderful aromas of mocha, currants, plums, pencil shavings, espresso, tar, vanilla, and spice. Truly complex (though the aromas seem streamlined at present), with excellent fruit, beautifully integrated tannins, balanced acidity, and a very long, refined hint of delicate mocha and black currants on the finish. A claret of incredible character, structure, and breed. 62% Cabernet Sauvignon, 33% Merlot, 3% Cabernet Franc, and 2% Petit Verdot. Now-2025++. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, December 2010)

93++ \$109.00 (#564864) Vintages Special Offer

Domaine de l'Arnesque 2009 Cuvée Capelane, Châteauneuf-du-Pape AOC, Rhône, France: Outstanding, extraordinarily structured and elegant, the 2009 Cuvée Capalane is a powerful, personality-filled Châteauneuf that collectors ought to seek out with brute determination. Brilliant, virtually opaque-ruby in colour, the wine features amazing, multilayered aromas of brambling blackberries and black raspberries, giving way to perfumed mocha, blueberries, kirsch liqueur, leather, licorice, violets, lavender, vanilla, and spice. Terrifically complex, with brilliantly textured fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and a wonderful, elegant hint of Provençal blackberries, kirsch, and minerals on the finish. Definitely in a league of its own. Now-2030++. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, December 2011)

93+ \$251652 (#251652) Vintages 7 January 2012 Release

Château Monbousquet 2001, St-Emilion Grand Cru AOC, Bordeaux, France: From one of the most underestimated vintages of the past ten years, the 2001 Château Monbousquet hits all strides with marvellous, comfortable ease. Brilliant, dark-opaque red-garnet in colour, the wine offers beautiful, maturing aromas of cedary plums and mocha, figs, cream, tar, earth, vanilla, and spice. Very complex, boasting superlative, fuller-formed fruit, fine tannins, balanced acidity, and a lasting hint of terrific cedary tobacco and dried plums on the finish. Possessing wonderful integration, harmony, and breed. The vineyard is planted to 60% Merlot, 30% Cabernet Franc, and 10% Cabernet Sauvignon. Now-2020. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, December 2010)

92+ \$139.00 (#71977) Vintages 2008 Spring Classics Collection

Kaesler 2007 The Bogan Shiraz, Barossa Valley, South Australia, Australia: For the past while, I'd been sampling the Grenache-based wines from Kaesler, which have not performed very well. However, then comes along the substantial '07 Bogan Shiraz, and I become duly impressed. Brilliant, opaque purple-ruby in colour, the wine is richly, but not overly, toasted, with enticing aromas of mocha, slightly baked currants and plums, blackberries, leather, spicebox, English lavender, and spice. Very complex, actually, possessing superb, near-supple fruit, reasonably firm tannins, mild acidity, and a lasting, sumptuous hint of smooth currants and mocha (laced with a little leather) on the finish. An extraordinary step up from other bottlings: brilliantly integrated, well structured, and extremely alluring. Now-2024. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, July 2011)

92 \$54.95 (#4234) Vintages 3 September 2011 Release

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Keenan 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon, Spring Mountain District (Napa Valley), California: Another outstanding wine from possibly the best vintage since 1997, the 2007 Keenan Cabernet Sauvignon is a rich, powerful, and plentiful bottling that should easily appeal to the North American collector's palate. Brilliant, opaque ruby in colour, the wine is beautifully toasted, featuring richly endowed aromas of milk chocolate, currants, plums, blackberry compote, 'dark' crushed flowers, graphite, vanilla, and spice. Complex, with absolutely delicious, sumptuous forward fruit, firm tannins, milder acidity, and a long, opulent hint of milk chocolate and plums on the finish. A blockbuster at 15.7% alcohol, extremely decadent, and concentrated. Now-2024+. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, December 2011)

91++ \$57.95 (#685685) Vintages 7 January 2012 Release

Caparzo 2005, Brunello di Montalcino DOCG, Tuscany, Italy: While not as fulsome as previous vintages, the 2005 Caparzo, crafted in a lighter style (common for the year), remains a Brunello of superb structure, balance, and clockwork function. Brilliant, dark garnet in colour, the wine is decisively traditional, gearing towards a much more delicate set of aromas: elegant wild cherries, cedarwood, mild chestnuts, underbrush, and a hint of roasted meats and spice. Complex, with beautiful fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and a refined hint of dried cedary cherries (boasting good grip) on the finish. Inescapably traditional and classy—such an easy wine to appreciate. Now-2017++. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, August 2011)

91 \$39.95 (#579094) Vintages 1 October 2011 Release

Louis M. Martini 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley, California: Like many other longstanding Napa operations, the test of time has not been entirely kind to Martini—this is why collectors ought to take special note when such as wines as the 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon are release, as a possible sign of a revitalization. Brilliant, opaque ruby in colour, this excellent wine offers enticing aromas of 'dusty' mocha shavings and currants, giving way to blackberries, licorice-infused kirsch, incense, tar, forest floor, vanilla, and spice. Very complex, with delicious forward fruit, firm tannins, milder acidity, and a hugely satisfying, lingering hint of mocha and blueberried currants on the finish. Hopefully, we'll see more such wines in the years to come. Also contains 10% Merlot, along with a dollop of Petit Verdot and Petite Sirah. Now-2018++. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, July 2011)

91 \$29.95 (#232371) Vintages 20 August 2011 Release

Dauvergne Ranvier 2007 Vin Rare, Gigondas AOC, Rhône, France: Forget the fact that I have no other notes from here, the 2007 Vin Rare makes for superb introductions. Brilliant, dark-opaque ruby in colour, the wine displays intrinsically 'regional' aromas of Provençal, herb-infused plums, black raspberries, leather, light kirsch, licorice, and spice. Complex, boasting truly delicious, well-defined fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and a lingering, abundant hint of 'dusty' black raspberries and kirsch on the finish. Powerful wine at 15.5% alcohol, yet possessing all the traits of an extraordinarily terroir-driven, characterful, and downright delicious bottling. 80% Grenache, 10% Syrah, the rest 10% Mourvèdre and Carignan. Now-2019++. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, July 2011)

91 \$31.95 (#226928) Vintages 20 August 2011 Release

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Simi 2007 Landslide Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon, Alexander Valley (Sonoma County), California: Resplendent single-vineyard wine from what was once a very great winery (now more variable than anything), the 2007 Landslide carries all the marks of a desirable collector's wine. Brilliant, opaque ruby in colour, it is richly toasted, with intense aromas of mocha, currants, black cherries, dried incense, blueberries, crème de cassis, asphalt, vanilla, and spice. Quite complex, with truly delicious, well-structured fruit, firm tannins, slightly milder acidity, and a lingering, polished hint of mocha and currants on the finish. Hopefully, Simi will continue with other wines like this in the years to come. Also contains 9% Merlot, 5% Malbec, 3% Cabernet Franc, 2% Petit Verdot, and 1% Tannat. Now-2020+. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, September 2011)

91 \$44.95 (#67744) Vintages 29 October 2011 Release

Château Valrose 2005 Cuvée Alienor, St-Estèphe AOC, Bordeaux, France: Never having tasted of this estate before, I viewed the 2005 Cuvée Alienor with a clean slate; and the results were most certainly excellent. Brilliant, dark-opaque ruby in colour, the wine is delicately toasted, with particularly refined aromas of slightly earthy, dark mocha, currants, plums, dried cherries, leather, charcoal, crushed rocks, and a hint of vanilla and spice. Complex, delivering beautiful, elegant fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and an almost rugged, poised hint of dark licorice, currants, and minerals on the finish. Marvellously crafted, finely structured, and exacting. One source lists this wine as 50% Merlot, 25% Cabernet Sauvignon, and 25% Cabernet Franc. Now-2022++. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, July 2011)

91 \$38.95 (#710517) Vintages 3 September 2011 Release

Zenato 2007, Amarone della Valpolicella Classico DOC, Veneto, Italy: One of the most powerful Amarones on the market, the 2007 Zenato is a profound, abundant wine, crafted in a style that many collectors have come to adore. Brilliant, dark-opaque ruby in colour, it features inviting aromas of walnut-infused baker's chocolate, cherries, stewed blackberries, figs, undergrowth, leather, tar, vanilla, and spice. Very complex, with delicious, authoritative fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and a very long, coaxing hint of walnuttied plums and baker's chocolate on the finish. Perhaps not as resolutely seductive as previous vintages; still one hell of a bruiser. Typically crafted to 80% Corvina, 10% Rondinella, 5% Molinara, and 5% Sangiovese. Now-2021+. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, August 2011)

91 \$49.95 (#413179) Vintages Essentials

Château Haut Bergey 2008, Pessac-Léognan AOC, Bordeaux, France: Owned by the sister of Daniel Cathiard (Château Smith Haut Lafitte), one would rightly expect the wines of Haut Bergey to be of appreciable stature; thankfully, this is more or less the case. Brilliant, dark-opaque ruby in colour, the '08 is lightly toasted, carrying beautiful aromas of dark currants, plums, smoke meat, black tea (very faint), forest floor, leather, and spice. Complex, with superbly structured, great fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and a refined, 'gravelly' hint of currants on the finish. A claret of exciting character, structure, and elegance. 60% Cabernet Sauvignon and 40% Merlot. Now-2019+. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, August 2011)

90++ \$44.95 (#234799) Vintages 17 September 2011 Release

Château Potensac 2008, Médoc AOC, Bordeaux, France: Under the same ownership as the magnificent Léoville-Las Cases, the past five years have witnessed a more

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flattering, fuller style of Potensac, with the '08 likely their best one yet. Brilliant, dark-opaque ruby in colour, the wine is finely toasted and fragrant, offering elegant aromas of currants, plums, violets, crushed rocks, subtle pain grille, forest floor, and a hint of 'berried' licorice and spice. Complex, with refined fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and a remarkably focused, elegant hint of currants (slightly perfumed) and graphite on the finish. A great Potensac of true harmony, balance, and breed. 42% Merlot, 40% Cabernet Sauvignon, and 18% Cabernet Franc. Now-2018++. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, August 2011)

90++ \$44.95 (#235432) Vintages 17 September 2011 Release

Summers 2006 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley, California: The first wine I have ever tasted from Summers, and let me just say that initial impressions are more than just favourable. Brilliant, dark-opaque ruby in colour, the 2006 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon is beautifully toasted, boasting dark, desirable aromas of black 'flowery' currants and mocha, switching to plums, cherries, incense, leather, charcoal, and a hint of vanilla and spice. Complex, with seriously delicious fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and an innately satisfying, lasting hint of currants, mocha, and cherried incense on the finish. A great wine of real personality, structure, and style. Now-2018++. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, July 2011)

90++ \$45.95 (#226597) Vintages 3 September 2011 Release

Akarua 2009 Bannockburn Pinot Noir, Central Otago, New Zealand: For all intents and purposes, Central Otago ought to be recognized (along with Martinborough) as the finest region for Pinot Noir in New Zealand. Brilliant, medium-dark ruby in colour, the 2009 Akarua, while strictly Californian in 'berry approach,' reveals beautiful aromas of fresh cherries, raspberries, plums, 'rocky' licorice, violets, and a hint of vanilla and spice. Complex, with superb fruit, fine, almost silky tannins, balanced acidity, and a refined hint of cherries and raspberries on the finish. In the end: a wine of great precision and finesse. Screwcap closure. Now-2016. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, September 2011)

90+ \$36.95 (#79541) Vintages 29 October 2011 Release

Lacoste Borie 2008, Pauillac AOC, Bordeaux, France: The 'second wine' of Château Grand-Puy-Lacoste, I have always found the Lacoste Borie label delicious and elegant, if not a tad limited in ambition. Still, collectors are well advised to give this wine a go: brilliant, dark ruby in colour, the '08 is even mildly rustic, with slightly earthy aromas of red currants, 'dusty' raspberried plus, pain grille, forest floor, leather, and spice. Complex, with beautifully structured, expression of fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and a poignant hint of subtle raspberried currants on the finish. Always a pleasure to encounter this wine at the table. Now-2018+. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, August 2011)

90+ \$39.95 (#249011) Vintages 17 September 2011 Release

Poggio Valente 2006, Morellino di Scansano Riserva DOCG, Tuscany, Italy: For my part, I have often found the DOCG of Morellino di Scansano to be overrated, with too many wines of unremarkable, straightjacketed quality. Not so with the '06 Poggio Valente Riserva, which is far superior to most of its counterparts. Brilliant, dark ruby-red currant in colour, the wine is excitingly peppery and elegantly meaty, with beautiful aromas of wild baked plums, dried cherries, leather, licorice, herbs, and spice. Complex,

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boasting great, powerful yet refined fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and a lingering, characterful hint of almost 'rugged' plums, leather, and a little toasted oak on the finish. Quite delicious, well structured, and expressive. Now-2018++. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, July 2011)

90+ \$34.95 (#230680) Vintages 3 September 2011 Release

Yalumba 2006 The Signature Cabernet Sauvignon/Shiraz, Barossa, South Australia, Australia: Another great wine from the well-sized Yalumba stable of quality wares, the 2006 Signature is a deluxe, inviting bottling that should have little trouble pleasing collectors. Brilliant, opaque ruby in colour, it is impressively toasted, delivering enticing, fairly substantial aromas of baked eucalyptus and plums, giving way to stewed blackberries and blueberries, licorice, leather, vanilla, and spice. Complex, with delicious, sumptuous forward fruit, supple yet firm tannins, mild acidity, and a very long hint of plummy eucalyptus and dark blueberries on the finish. Beautifully fashioned and inviting. 69% Cabernet Sauvignon and 31% Shiraz. Now-2019++. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, July 2011)

90+ \$51.95 (#528356) Vintages 3 September 2011 Release

Château Beaucastel 2009 Coudoulet de Beaucastel, Côtes-du-Rhône AOC, Rhône, France: Like its other wines, the Coudoulet de Beaucastel keeps on improving year after year, with the '09 quite possibly the best one yet. Brilliant, dark-opaque ruby in colour, it delivers inviting aromas of slightly brambling raspberried plums, lavender, pain grille, licorice, and a lovely hint of incense and spice. Complex and characterful, with great fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and a lingering, delicious hint of brambling plums along with a few raspberries on the finish. Sincerely well balanced, focused, and appetizing. Grenache, Syrah, Cinsault, and Mourvèdre. Now-2019++. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, September 2011)

90 \$29.95 (#48884) Vintages 29 October 2011 Release

Domaine du Grand Montmirail 2009, Vacqueyras AOC, Rhône, France: Deliciously structured and finely assembled, the 2009 Grand Montmirail is the type of Vacqueyras that is strikingly easy to enjoy. Brilliant, opaque ruby in colour with a touch of purple, the wine is lightly toasted, carrying enticing aromas of brambling plums, blackberries, 'deep' leather, undergrowth, Provençal herbs, and a hint of cassis and spice. Complex, with superb fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and a lingering, robust hint of leathery blackberries on the finish. Very tempting, indeed. 50% Grenache and 50% Syrah. Now-2020++. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, December 2011)

90 \$24.95 (#251579) Vintages 7 January 2012 Release

Château Patris 2008, St-Emilion Grand Cru AOC, Bordeaux, France: Like many other wines in '08, Château Patris comes off as sorely underrated when considering its overall quality. Brilliant, dark ruby in colour, the wine offers beautiful aromas of delicate dried mocha, licorice-infused currants and plums, mild graphite, and a hint of leather, dried cherries, and spice. Complex, with truly fine fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and a precise, polished hint of currants and licorice on the finish. Quite tempting, actually, possessing impressive balance, structure, and refinement. The vineyard is planted to 80% Merlot, 10% Cabernet Franc, and 10% Cabernet Sauvignon. Now-2018++. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, July 2011)

90 \$29.95 (#231183) Vintages 29 October 2011 Release

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Penfolds 2008 Bin 128 Shiraz, Coonawarra, South Australia, Australia: The Coonawarra 'bin' from the massive Penfolds stable of wines, the 2008 Bin 128 is a generous, beautifully polished Shiraz that is sure to give collectors great pleasure on the first go. Brilliant, opaque ruby in colour, the wine is finely toasted, with noticeably pure aromas of slightly minty eucalyptus, currants, blackberries, dark 'dusty' blueberries, leather, tar, and a lovely hint of white pepper, vanilla, and spice. Complex, with deliciously powerful, forward fruit, firm yet supple tannins, mild acidity, and a very long hint of slightly minty currants and subtle eucalyptus on the finish. Excellently done. Now-2020++. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, July 2011)

90 \$34.95 (#509919) Vintages 20 August 2011 Release

Ross 2006 Shiraz, Barossa Valley, South Australia, Australia: Is the burly Barossa style on its way out, including the good ones with the bad? Hopefully, only the latter shall one disappear, with wines like the Ross 2006 Shiraz staying on for the long run. Brilliant, opaque ruby in colour with a touch of red currant, it delivers an enticing array of aromas, beginning with finely toasted oak and switching to roasted coffee, baked currants, smoky earth, leather, eucalyptus, vanilla, and spice. Complex, with delicious forward fruit, firm yet slightly supple tannins, mild acidity, and a truly lengthy hint of baked plums and roasted coffee on the finish. Powerful, superlative wine. Screwcap closure. Now-2022+. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, July 2011)

90 \$30.95 (#233825) Vintages 20 August 2011 Release

Château Vieux Sarpe 2006, St-Emilion Grand Cru AOC, Bordeaux, France: Perhaps aging a tad quicker than expected, the 2006 Château Vieux Sarpe is nonetheless a refined, characterful claret that collectors should hardly avoid—rather, the opposite would seem to apply. Brilliant, dark ruby-red in colour, it reveals fascinating aromas of red plums infused with cedarwood, graphite, forest floor, sweet licorice, fragrant dried incense, and spice. Complex, boasting refined, polished fruit, fine tannins, balanced acidity, and a beautiful hint of red plums, plus the slightest 'shade' of cedarwood, on the finish. Approaching maturity quite happily, and the none the worse for going about it quicker. Now-2016. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, September 2011)

90 \$34.95 (#943662) Vintages 29 October 2011 Release

Wolf Blass 2009 Gold Label Shiraz/Viognier, Adelaide Hills, South Australia, Australia: A stunning improvement over many of the previous Gold Label wines I have tasted, the 2009 Shiraz/Viognier is a superbly styled, balanced, and focused Côte-Rôtie-inspired blend. Brilliant, opaque purple-ruby in colour, the wine displays a beautiful aromatic profile of eucalyptus-infused violets, purple plums, currants, blueberries, mocha, gentle leather, spring flowers, vanillin, and spice. Complex, with deliciously flavoured, forward, supple fruit, near-firm tannins, milder acidity, and a lingering, velvety hint of violets, eucalyptus, and plums on the finish. Delicious. Screwcap closure. Now-2022+. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, December 2011)

90 \$27.95 (#606301) Vintages 7 January 2012 Release

Zema Estate 2006 Family Selection Cabernet Sauvignon, Coonawarra, South Australia, Australia: Before encountering this bottling, I had never heard of the Zema Estate. No matter, as the '06 Family Selection seems to make for very good introductions. Brilliant, opaque red currant in colour with a touch of garnet, the wine is

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intensely aromatic, featuring baked, slightly cedary eucalyptus and plums, stewed leather and blackberries, cassis, mint, coffee grounds, vanilla, and spice. Complex, with forward, powerful supple fruit and tannins, mild acidity, and a very long hint of baked eucalyptus and blackberries on the finish. Huge Coonawarra Cabernet: powerful, somewhat atypical, yet unmistakably inviting all the same. Screwcap closure. Now-2020+. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, September 2011)

90 \$49.95 (#250548) Vintages 29 October 2011 Release

Tenuta di Nozzole 2007 La Forra, Chianti Classico Riserva DOCG, Tuscany, Italy: From the multi-estate operation of Ambrogio e Giovanni Folanari, the 2007 La Forra is an impressive, traditional-styled Chianti Classico Riserva of real appeal, character, and elegance. Brilliant, dark ruby-red currant in colour, the wine presents lovely aromas of smoked earth, dried savoury plums, spicebox, and just a trace of dried cherries, plus plenty of leather and undergrowth. Complex, with very fine fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and an elegant hint of dried cherries and cedar on the finish. Highly admirable and beautifully assembled. 90% Sangiovese and ‘complimentary’ grapes. Now-2016+. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, September 2011)

89++ \$29.95 (#177279) Vintages 15 October 2011 Release

Altocedro 2008 Reserva Malbec, La Consulta Vineyards, Uco Valley (Mendoza), Argentina: Deliciously textured and powerful, the 2008 Reserva performs with impressive agility and strength. Brilliant, opaque ruby in colour with a touch of purple, the wine is finely toasted, with abundant aromas of mocha, crème de cassis, dark blueberries, kirsch, violets, mint, smoke, vanilla, and spice. Complex, with delightfully velvety forward fruit, firm tannins, milder acidity, and a lingering, ultimately satisfying hint of plummy crème de cassis on the finish. At 15% alcohol, this is a very big wine, yet it holds together so beautifully that it remains a non-factor. Now-2018+. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, December 2011)

89+ \$24.95 (#187880) Vintages 7 January 2012 Release

Château de Lamarque 2006, Haut-Médoc AOC, Bordeaux, France: Backward and old-fashioned, the 2006 Château de Lamarque will invariably appeal more to claret traditionalists than modernists. Brilliant, dark-opaque ruby-red currant in colour, the wine is rustic to the core, featuring engaging aromas of earthy currants and plums, dried cherries, underbrush, tobacco, scorched earth, mild cedarwood, and spice. Complex, with beautiful fruit, very firm tannins, balanced acidity, and an elegant hint of currants and tobacco on the finish. Sincerely impressive, well structured, and refined. Now-2017++. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, December 2011)

89+ \$29.95 (#194159) Vintages 7 January 2012 Release

Campiña de Toro 2008 Sabor Real, Toro DO, Spain: An incredible bargain, to say the least, the 2008 Sabor Real is a delectable, full-bodied, modern Toro that both collectors and general enthusiasts ought not to miss. Brilliant, opaque ruby in colour, the wine displays attractive, ‘deep’ aromas of slightly fragrant blackberry compote, plums, black fruits, forest floor, kirsch, incense, and spice. Surprisingly complex, with superb fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and a satisfying, lingering hint of blackberries, kirsch, and minerals on the finish. Performs well beyond expectations. Now-2018+. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, December 2011)

89 \$15.95 (#172932) Vintages 7 January 2012 Release

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Fattoria La Ripa 2007, Chianti Classico Riserva DOCG, Tuscany, Italy: For collectors of elegant, traditionally-styled Chianti Classico Riserva, the 2007 Fattoria La Ripa is a clear winner. Brilliant, dark red currant in colour with a touch of garnet, it is slightly closed at present, hinting at lovely aromas of wild plums, sour cherries, cedar, underbrush, balsam, tar, tree bark, and spice. Complex, boasting very fine, elegant fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and a refined hint of plums and cedar on the finish. Traditional yet fresh, the structure and balance is impressive. 90% Sangiovese and 10% Canaiolo. Now-2018+. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, December 2011)

89 \$24.95 (#984401) Vintages 7 January 2012 Release

Domaine Bernard Baudry 2009, Chinon AOC, Loire, France: From arguably the most famous appellation devoted to Cabernet Franc in the world, the 2009 Baudry Chinon seems to hit all strides with as minimal a fuss as possible, picking up some very lovely characteristics along the way. Brilliant, dark ruby in colour with a touch of purple, it is rather claret-like in style, with delightful notes of delicate, fragrant currants, plums, earthy incense, raspberries, a little leather, and spice. Complex, with fine fruit, near-firm tannins, balanced acidity, and a refined hint of perfumed currants on the finish. Elegant, balanced, and properly ripe—the way good Chinon should be. Now-2015+. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, July 2011)

88++ \$19.95 (#940783) Vintages 20 August 2011 Release

Castello di Querceto 2008, Chianti Classico DOCG, Tuscany, Italy: Think of the 2008 Querceto Chianti Classico as an everyday red no collector should be without. Brilliant, dark-opaque ruby in colour, the wine is nicely toasted, with lovely notes of dried mocha, black cherries, plums, blackberries, forest floor, leather, vanilla, and spice. Complex, with fine fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and a splendid hint of dried black cherries and black forest cake on the finish. Appealing modern style, with very good structure, breadth, and balance. 92% Sangiovese and 8% Canaiolo. Now-2017+. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, September 2011)

88++ \$21.95 (#680496) Vintages 29 October 2011 Release

Baracchi 2008 Smeriglio Syrah, Cortona DOC, Tuscany, Italy: Created in 1999, the DOC of Cortona is located south of Arezzo and covers a noticeable range of international varieties. Brilliant, dark ruby in colour, the 2008 Smeriglio Syrah reveals lovely youthful aromas of black plums intermixed with pastrami (seriously), white pepper, forest floor, leather, and a hint of wild black cherries and spice. Complex, with fine fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and a polished hint of moderate peppery plums (plus a trace of deli meats) on the finish. Splendid flavour profile, structure, and character. Now-2017+. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, August 2011)

88+ \$24.95 (#242073) Vintages 1 October 2011 Release

Capezzana 2008, Barco Reale di Carmignano DOC, Tuscany, Italy: For those who are curious, the DOC of Barco Reale was created within the same boundaries as the Carmignano DOCG for younger, earlier drinking wines; of which the 2008 Capezzana certainly qualifies. Brilliant, dark ruby in colour, it features slightly rugged, understated notes of gently cedary dried cherries, plums, leather, undergrowth, and spice. Palate: fine fruit showing, with firm tannins, balanced acidity, and a lovely hint of cedar-laced plums and undergrowth on the finish. Robust, balanced, and finely structured. 70%

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Sangiovese, 20% Cabernet Sauvignon, and 10% Canaiolo. Now-2017. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, December 2011)

88 \$15.95 (#508531) Vintages 7 January 2012 Release

Durigutti 2008 Malbec, Mendoza, Argentina: As an everyday wine, the 2008 Durigutti Malbec is a first-rate offering. Brilliant, virtually opaque ruby in colour, it reveals slightly brambling blueberried currants, plums, flowery violets, mulberries, incense, and spice. On the palate: very good fruit showing, with firm tannins, milder acidity, and a satisfying hint of plums and a little incense on the finish. Appealing, tasty, and flavourful—meets all standard expectations for its type. Now-2015++. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, August 2011)

88 \$16.95 (#246124) Vintages 17 September 2011 Release

Quinta de Ventozelo 2007 Touriga Nacional, Douro DOC, Portugal: Like so many wineries in Portugal, the table reds of Quinta de Ventozelo have skyrocketed in quality over the past several years. Brilliant, dark-opaque ruby in colour, the '07 Touriga Nacional is moderately toasted (light American oak?), with pleasing notes of mocha, currants, blueberries, plums, some black cherries, a few flowers, and a hint of vanilla and spice. Reasonably complex, with fine fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and a polished, lingering hint of mocha and blueberried currants on the finish. Ideal as a full-bodied, seriously tasty everyday wine. Now-2018. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, July 2011)

88 \$19.95 (#657452) Vintages 20 August 2011 Release

Château Les Croisille 2009 Cuvée Château, Cahors AOC, Southwest, France: For a Cahors, the 2009 Cuvée Château is nicely formatted, balanced, and fresh. Brilliant, opaque purple-ruby in colour, the wine displays solid, straightforward notes of slightly peppery black plums, brambleberries, cloves, leather, violets, and spice. Palate: good fruit expression, with firm tannins, balanced acidity, and a neat hint of plums (seasoned with a little white pepper) on the finish. Fairly basic, good for its type. 80% Malbec and 20% Merlot. Now-2017. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, December 2011)

87+ \$16.95 (#255018) Vintages 7 January 2012 Release

Sparkling Wines:

Taittinger NV Réserve Brut, Champagne, France: Unquestionably one of my favourite family-owned houses, the sturdy, charming 'house wine' of Taittinger is a bubbly collectors would be proud to call their own. Starbright, pale straw in colour, it displays intensely toasted biscuits at the outset, with beautiful accompanying scents of lemon, yellow pears, cinnamon, and a hint of white flowers and jasmine. Complex, with splendidly elegant, crisp fruit, balanced acidity, and a stylish hint of biscuits and lemon (slightly creamy) on the finish. A champagne of great structure, balance, and style. Now-2016+. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, September 2011)

91 \$53.95 (#814723) Vintages 29 October 2011 Release

André et Michel Drappier NV Nature Zero Dosage Brut, Champagne, France: A type of champagne whereby no dosage (sweetening) has been added prior to final corking; a style that has grown hugely in popularity over the past several years. Starbright, light straw in colour, the Nature Zero Dosage is finely toasted and definitely more fruit-driven

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than expected (a common featured of Pinot Noir-oriented champagne), with lovely scents of yeasty brioche, white flowers, nuts, straw, and spice. Complex, possessing a beautiful crisp entry of fine fruit, balanced acidity, and an elegant hint of straw-laced biscuits on the finish. Very stylish, polished, and uniquely characterful—I am very impressed. Now-2018+. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, August 2010)

90 \$42.95 (#179275) Vintages 2 October 2010 Release

Baron-Fuenté Vintage 2003 Grand Millésime Brut, Champagne, France: While the vintage as a whole leaves much to be desired, the 2003 Grand Millésime represents a superb, polished outing for Baron-Fuenté, for which I seem to have no other notes. Starbright, pale straw in colour, the wine displays intense scents of biscuits, dried pears, baked lemon, Finn Crisp®, Golden Delicious apples, and a hint of brioche and spice. Complex, with very fine, elegant fruit, balanced acidity, and a refined hint of lemon and biscuits (very pure) on the finish. Very yeasty in character, quite unique, and beautifully fashioned. Now-2019. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, September 2010)

90 \$47.95 (#155119) Vintages 30 October 2010 Release

Marc Hébrart NV Blanc de Blancs Brut, Champagne, France: The first time I have ever tasted from this small-scale house, the Marc Hébrart Blanc de Blancs does justice to 'first impressions' in deliciously precise fashion. Starbright, pale straw-lime in colour, the wine displays beautiful scents of pear-infused brioche, white grapefruit, lemon, ginger, white flowers, and a hint of chalk and spice. Complex, with truly lovely, poised and crisp fruit, balanced acidity, and a superbly elegant hint of biscuits and pears on the finish. Quite delicious and pure—the way Blanc de Blancs (among other things) ought to be. Now-2017+. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, August 2011)

90 \$41.95 (#231217) Vintages 17 September 2011 Release

Roederer NV Estate Brut Rosé, Anderson Valley (Mendocino County), California: From arguably the greatest producer of sparkling wine in California (and I am not the only one who thinks this), the rosé version of the Estate Brut is as equally beautiful as the standard version. Starbright, light pink-salmon in colour, it is finely toasted, with engaging scents of fresh biscuits and cherries, giving way to ruby-red grapefruit, dried strawberries, flowers, and spice. Complex, delivering lovely delicate fruit, balanced acidity, and an elegant hint of ruby-red grapefruit and dried cherries on the finish. A 'blushing bubbly' of splendid purity and delicacy. Now-2015+. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, September 2010)

90 \$34.95 (#479758) Vintages 30 October 2010 Release

Fortified Wines:

Taylor Fladgate 2009 Vargellas Vinha Velha Vintage Port, Douro DOC, Portugal: Crafted in only the very finest vintages and in extremely small quantities, the single-vineyard Vargellas Vinha Velha represents one of the most ultimate, desirable fortified wines in the world; of which the '09 is probably one of the best ever, plain and simple. Brilliant, opaque ruby in colour, the wine seems to bask in near-immortal, multilayered aromas of slightly brambling, fragrant black fruits and fruitcake, black chocolate, kirsch, crème de cassis, stewed plums, cookie crumble, incense, forest floor, mahogany wood, vanilla, and spice. Insanely complex, featuring sublime fruit, firm tannins, perfect acidity, and an omnipotent, astounding hint of fragrant brambling black fruits on the finish.

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Indisputably one of the greatest ports I've ever tasted—dizzily stupendous in virtually every respect. Now-2075++. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, October 2011)

99+ \$275.00 (#73635) Vintages Special Offer

Taylor Fladgate 2009 Vintage Port, Douro DOC, Portugal: Unquestionably one of the greatest vintage ports Taylor Fladgate has produced in many decades, the 2009 revels in such purity, such splendour, that I have trouble coming to grips with its greatness at such a young age. Brilliant, opaque purple-ruby in colour, it offers up decadent, abundant aromas of fragrant black fruits and fruitcake, kirsch, crème de cassis, crushed flowers, dates, forest floor, dark chocolate, tar, asphalt, and spice. Extremely complex, delivering sensationally polished, magnificently structured fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and a heavenly, resplendent hint of flowery crème de cassis and black fruits on the finish. With so much going on at such an early stage of its existence, who knows how awesome this might one day become. Now-2065++. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, October 2011)

97++ \$135.00 (#256925) Vintages Special Offer

Warre's 1994 Vintage Port, Douro DOC, Portugal: Some have claimed that the 1994 vintage has been excessively hyped; these tend to be same individuals that claim the same thing for 1977. In both cases, I believe they're in error, particularly with regard to the former. Brilliant, dark-opaque red-garnet in colour, the '94 Warre's is evolving terrifically, exhibiting a wonderful bouquet of cedarwood-/mahogany-inspired fruitcake, figs, raisins, candy canes, spicebox, leather, forest floor, mint, and tar. Truly complex, with magnificent fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and a finely structured, slowly maturing hint of dark fruits and mahogany on the finish. Fantastically elegant, integrated, and full of finesse. What more could you want? Now-2030+. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, October 2011)

95++ \$99.00 (#446047) Vintages Special Offer