

# The Successful Collector – By Julian Hitner

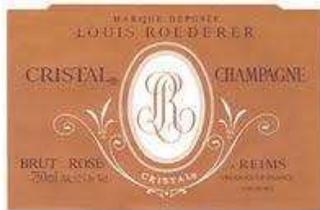
~ TSO Fine Wine Auction – a collector’s delight ~  
Saturday, December 24<sup>th</sup>, 2011

## The highs and the lows:

On Tuesday 13 October, the 21<sup>st</sup> annual TSO Fine Wine Auction was held at Waddington’s auction house in downtown Toronto. Organized by the Toronto Symphony Orchestra Volunteer Committee (TSVC) to raise money for one of Canada’s most illustrious orchestras, a full house of eager collectors were in attendance to bid on 233 separate lots of (mostly) premium wine.



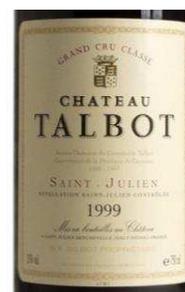
So much for the basic information. Chances are, most people are probably just interested in



the highlights and lowlights of the evening. Fair enough, but first it should be noted that this wasn’t your typical fine wine auction. Because all money raised was meant for charity, bidders were not required to pay any taxes, such as a buyer’s premium, on their

purchases—a direct contrast to other wine auctions, where bidders are usually faced with all sorts of fees when collecting their winnings. A case in point: I attended the Vintages Fine Wine Auction about a week after this one, bringing along a few friends. They successfully bid on an eleven-bottle lot of ’01 Palmer, and it wound up costing them almost a thousand bucks more when the additional fees were tossed in. Makes you think ...

Now for the highlights of the TSO auction. Come to think of it, there really weren’t that many wines that sold beyond the expected bidding range. Checking my auction catalogue, which I’d retained for purposes of writing this column, the only serious highlights were: a twelve-bottle lot of ’99 Château Talbot (est. \$1,000-1,400) that went for \$1,700—ridiculous when considering



the mediocrity of the vintage; a two-bottle lot of ’72 and ’75 Château Figeac (est. \$150-250) that fetched \$400—unbelievable considering how bad a vintage 1972 was; a bottle ’88 Cristal Rosé (est. \$300-450) that sold for an astounding \$1,100; and a salmanazar (9 litres) of ’88 Pol Roger (est. \$400-600) that logged in at an equally steep \$1,100. Looks like a few bidders in attendance

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had their hearts set on these two bottles of dazzling champagne. For my part, I think they paid too much for both.

As for the lowlights, there were too many to count. Either the estimate ranges for most of the lots were greatly exaggerated, or bidders were simply unwilling to write large cheques in this current economic climate. Personally, I am inclined to accept both explanations as plausible: there is no question in my mind that estimates were too high, and with the economy as bad as it is, it should come as no surprise that collectors would be a little less willing to part with larger sums of their (hopefully) hard-earned money.

All the same, I would be negligent in my commentary if I were to omit some of the more shocking lowlights of the auction: 4 bottles of '99 Lafite (est. \$5,000-7,000) at \$3,250; 3 bottles of '00 Haut-Brion (est. \$2,650-3,750) at \$2,000; a case of '82 Léoville-Las Cases (est. \$7,500-10,500) at \$5,500; a case of '93 Mouton (est. \$7,250-10,500) at \$5,000—an extreme example of overestimating; 3 bottles of '01 Le



Pin (est. \$6,000-8,500) at \$5,000; 6 bottles of '01 Lafite (est. \$7,000-10,000) at \$4,500—one of the ultimate steals of the night; 3 bottles of Domaine de la Romanée-Conti '86 Grands Échezeaux (est. \$2,000-3,000) at \$1,400; 2 bottles of Beaulieu '68 George de Latour Reserve (est. \$600-900) at \$350; and 5 bottles of Jim Barry '93 The Armagh (est. \$1,100-1,600) at \$350. I can name a dozen more if you like.

Still, when adding up the money earned by all 233 lots of wine, the TSVF, one of my favourite volunteer organizations in the city (I always make a point of mentioning this when I write about good volunteer groups), our beloved Toronto Symphony Orchestra should hopefully be well looked after for the next while. Coming up in 2012: Mozart's 'Jupiter' Symphony (no. 41) at 6:30 p.m. on 11 January; Roy Thomson Hall, of course.

[Click here for a few gems](#)

## **A few gems for collectors:**

### **White Wines:**

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**Kumeu River 2008 Maté's Vineyard Chardonnay, Auckland, New Zealand:** Funny how it seems that Kumeu River has become one of New Zealand's premier producers of fine Chardonnay overnight? Go figure. Anyways: starbright, light greenish-lime in colour, the 2008 Maté's Vineyard is finely toasted, offering expressive scents of dried (carnival) caramel, apricots, quince, orange peel (very intense), pears, green apples, and a hint of minerals and spice. Complex, with beautiful, almost Burgundian-styled fruit, balanced acidity, and a 'flexible,' engaging hint of pears and quince on the finish. Definitely Old World in style, with that New Zealand purity and 'cut' I have long come to love. Screwcap closure. Now-2018. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, October 2011)

**91+ \$44.95 (#204032) Vintages 12 November 2011 Release**

**Robert Young 2007 Chardonnay, Alexander Valley (Sonoma County), California:** While unmistakably crafted in the North American style—rich, abundant, and rather alcoholic (14.7%)—the 2007 Robert Young Chardonnay is nonetheless a terrifically tempting wine that collectors would be hard-pressed not to like. Starbright, light greenish-lime in colour, the wine delivers decadent, more tropical scents of butterscotch, nectarines, poached pears, orange zest, apricots, honeysuckle, vanilla, and nuts. Complex, with deliciously unctuous fruit, slightly milder acidity, and a superb, lasting hint of butterscotch and pears on the finish. Not my style, but extremely inviting for those who enjoy this type of wine—and there sure are a lot of you! Now-2020. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, November 2011)

**91 \$49.95 (#670430) Vintages 10 December 2011 Release**

**Beringer 2008 Sbragia Limited Release Chardonnay, Napa Valley, California:** To be honest, I'd never heard of this wine before; it does not even appear on the Beringer website. This notwithstanding, the 2008 Sbragia Limited Release remains an excellent Napa Chardonnay. Starbright, light greenish-lime in colour, it is richly toasted, with beautiful 'New World' scents of natted pears and quince, cream, butterscotch, orange zest, vanilla, apricots, and a hint of honeysuckle. Noticeably complex, with full-bodied, inviting fruit, slightly milder acidity, high alcohol (though even at 15.2% it seems to hold together), and a delicious, lingering hint of natted pears and butterscotch on the finish. Massive, tempting style, though not entirely without a slight Burgundian influence—you be the judge. Now-2019. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, October 2011)

**90++ \$54.95 (#79178) Vintages 12 November 2011 Release**

**Cakebread Cellars 2009 Chardonnay, Napa Valley, California:** A considerable improvement over previous vintages, the 2009 Cakebread Chardonnay, while invariable tropical and full-throttle in style, nonetheless comes across as remarkably delicious and balanced bottling. Starbright, light lime in colour, the wine offers slightly toasted, tropical-oriented scents of pears, nectarines, apricots, dried butterscotch, subtle vanilla, and a hint of stone fruit and lemon. Complex, with beautifully rounded, more forward fruit, milder acidity, and a polished hint of tropical pears on the finish. Personally, this is not my style, though there are so many collectors out there that would love such a wine. Now-2018. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, August 2011)

**90++ \$57.95 (#709717) Vintages 1 October 2011 Release**

**Le Clos Jordanne 2009 Talon Ridge Vineyard Chardonnay, Vinemount Ridge, VQA Niagara Peninsula, Canada:** By now it should seem readily apparent: the whites of Le Clos Jordanne are nowadays a great deal superior to their reds. Starbright, pale-light

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lime in colour with a touch of straw, the 2009 Talon Ridge Chardonnay, more restrained than previous vintages, offers very attractive scents of slightly smoky pears, lemon, white flowers, apricots, minerals, caramel, and spice. Complex, with elegant, polished fruit, crisp acidity, and a lovely hint of lemony butterscotch and yellow pears on the finish. Graceful yet poignant, this is one impressive Niagara white! Now-2017+. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, August 2011)

**90 \$40.00 (#143974) Vintages 1 October 2011 Release**

## Red Wines:

**Brotte 2009 Vieilles Vignes, Châteauneuf-du-Pape AOC, Rhône, France:** Quite likely the best Brotte I have ever tasted, the 2009 Vieilles Vignes is an excellent, slightly fruitier-styled Châteauneuf that collectors would have to try very hard not to like. Brilliant, dark ruby in colour, the wine possesses amazingly youthful, beautiful aromas of flowery plums, licorice, leather, crème de cassis, incense, underbrush, lavender, and spice. Very complex, with outstanding, delicious fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and an adolescent, exuberant hint of deep plummy incense and lavender (very subtle) on the finish. A superb wine with a whole lot going for it. Now-2022++. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, July 2011)

**92 \$49.95 (#184234) Vintages Online Exclusives**

**Craggy Range 2005 Sophia, Gimblett Gravels (Hawkes Bay), New Zealand:** One of the top Bordeaux blends of the superlative Craggy Range stable, the 2005 Sophia is a wine of excellent prowess, focus, and harmony. Brilliant, dark-opaque ruby in colour, it is finely toasted, with superb aromas of subtle mocha and currants, giving way to blackberries, purple plums, violets, Oreo Cookie wafers, asphalt, kirsch, vanilla, and spice. Very complex, with outstanding forward, poised fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and a lingering, silky hint of mocha and violet currants on the finish. Exceptionally well done! 62% Merlot, 34% Cabernet Franc, and 4% Cabernet Sauvignon. Now-2019++. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, July 2011)

**92 \$56.95 (#57711) Vintages Online Exclusives**

**Hawkeye Mountain 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon, Alexander Valley (Sonoma Valley), California:** Premium bottling under the auspices of the Kendall-Jackson conglomerate, the 2006 Hawkeye Cabernet Sauvignon is a worthy collector's wine in virtually every respect. Brilliant, dark-opaque ruby in colour, it is seriously well toasted (in just the right amount), with beautiful aromas of slightly coffee-infused mocha and currants, cherried licorice, forest floor, incense, leather, vanilla, and spice. Very complex, with excellent, deliciously forward yet adequately restrained fruit, firm tannins, milder acidity, and a lingering, near-sumptuous hint of dried 'dusty' mocha and currants on the finish. Superb Cabernet of serious structure, flavour, and balance. Now-2020++. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, July 2011)

**92 \$68.95 (#52266) Vintages Online Exclusives**

**Jonata 2007 Todos Red, Santa Ynez Valley, California:** Like most other wines from Jonata, this one is as Parkerized as ever; yet with so much in the way of decadence, structure, and temptation, few collectors should care. Brilliant, opaque ruby in colour, the 2007 Todos Red features decisively rich, poignantly attractive aromas of flowery currants, plums, and blueberries, giving way to black incense, kirsch, tar, pain grille,

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blackberry compote, vanilla, and spice. Very complex, boasting richly endowed, sumptuous fruit, firm tannins, milder acidity, and an extremely lengthy, powerful hint of ripe flowery blackberries and plums on the finish. Definitely for the North American palate. 45% Syrah, 35% Cabernet Sauvignon, the rest Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Viognier, and Sangiovese. Now-2023+. (Julian Hitner, *The Successful Collector*, October 2011)

**91++ \$59.95 (#218941) Vintages 12 November 2011 Release**

**Columbia Crest 2007 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon, Columbia Valley, Washington State:** Compared to the 'straight-up' version, the Columbia Crest Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon is like night versus day in terms of quality. Brilliant, dark-opaque ruby in colour, the '07 is finely toasted, revealing more restrained yet inviting aromas of silky, licorice-infused mocha, switching to plummy currants, incense, leather, and a hint of graphite, vanilla, and spice. Complex, with really delicious forward fruit, firm tannins, milder acidity, and a slightly velvety, extremely satisfying hint of cocoa powder, currants, and licorice on the finish. Truly appealing, well structured, and stylish. Now-2019+. (Julian Hitner, *The Successful Collector*, July 2011)

**91+ \$48.95 (#56515) Vintages Online Exclusives**

**Clos de l'Oratoire 2008, St-Emilion Grand Cru Classé AOC, Bordeaux, France:** Amazing how much this estate has improved over the past several years, the 2008 Clos de l'Oratoire probably represents owner Stephan von Neipperg's best outing thus far. Brilliant, opaque ruby in colour, the wine is beautifully toasted, with rich aromas of chocolaty mocha, ripe plums and blackberries, kirsch, licorice, coffee, leather, vanilla, and spice. Very complex, with delicious, fairly generous fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and a lingering, sexy hint of mocha and plums on the finish. Definitely modern, attractive, and balanced. 95% Merlot and 5% Cabernet Franc. Now-2025+. (Julian Hitner, *The Successful Collector*, November 2011)

**91+ \$49.00 (#135749) Vintages Online Exclusives**

**Kilikanoon 2007 Parable Shiraz, McLaren Vale, Australia:** Though based out of Clare Valley, Kilikanoon brings in grapes from McLaren Vale to craft its Parable Shiraz—a very rich, silky wine, by the way. Brilliant, opaque ruby in colour, it is beautifully toasted, with assertive yet surprisingly 'elegant' (for want of a better word) aromas of minty mocha, blackberries, currants, leather, coffee, vanilla, and spice. Complex, with delicious forward fruit, supple yet firm tannins, mild acidity, and a smooth, lasting hint of mocha, eucalyptus, and plums on the finish. Enticing and powerful, like so many others from this neck of the woods—not to be missed, nonetheless. Screwcap closure. Now-2024. (Julian Hitner, *The Successful Collector*, October 2011)

**91+ \$39.95 (#59824) Vintages 12 November 2011 Release**

**Mitolo 2008 Serpico Cabernet Sauvignon, McLaren Vale, Australia:** A rare oddity when considering how this powerful, sumptuous wine was made: in the appassimento fashion—the same way Amarone is made. The result? Something most pleasing: brilliant, opaque ruby in colour, the 2008 Serpico features extremely powerful aromas of eucalyptus and brownies, switching to stewed plums, fruitcake, blackberry compote, tar, vanilla, and spice. Complex, with sincerely smooth, powerful fruit, supple tannins, mild acidity, and a lengthy, polished hint of brownies and smooth plums on the finish. Quite the serious mouthful. Screwcap closure. Now-2022++. (Julian Hitner, *The Successful Collector*, October 2011)

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**91+ \$54.95 (#659599) Vintages 12 November 2011 Release**

**d'Arenberg 2008 The Dead Arm Shiraz, McLaren Vale, Australia:** Flagship wine of the once-iconic d'Arenberg operation, it has been painful to watch the decline of this once-stellar winery. Fortunately, The Dead Arm label still knows how to shine, with the '08 vintage serving to illustrate this very point. Brilliant, opaque ruby in colour, the wine offers extremely inviting aromas of 'inky' eucalyptus and blackberries, blueberries, spring flowers, lavender, and a lovely hint of 'dusty' mocha, vanilla, and spice. Quite complex, delivering supple forward fruit and tannins, mild acidity, and a long, polished hint of eucalyptus, plums, and flowers on the finish. Much more fragrant than previous vintages, still a superb wine. Screwcap closure. Now-2024. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, October 2011)

**91 \$54.95 (#981183) Vintages 12 November 2011 Release**

**Domaine de Bonserine 2008 La Sarrasine, Côte-Rôtie AOC, Rhône, France:** Acquired by Marcel Guigal in 2006, the Domaine de Bonserine still operates independently, with the striking '06 La Sarrasine logging in as a truly great wine in its own right. Brilliant, dark-opaque purple-ruby in colour, the wine is gently peppery at the outset, with beautiful, delicate aromas of black plums, blackberries, brambleberries, smoky leather, scorched earth, and spice. Complex, with superb, slightly silky fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and a refined hint of brambling plums (plus a shade of white pepper) on the finish. Truly appetizing, well structured, and elegant. Now-2022+. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, August 2011)

**91 \$49.95 (#606442) Vintages 1 October 2011 Release**

**San Felice 2005 Campogiovanni, Brunello di Montalcino DOCG, Tuscany, Italy:** Year in, year out one of the most reliable estates in Tuscany, the 2005 Campogiovanni ranks as a Brunello of great structure and traditionalism, especially when considering how challenging a vintage it was. Brilliant, dark red currant in colour with a touch of garnet, it possesses elegant, endearing aromas of slightly meaty cherries and plums, cedarwood, mild chestnuts, spicebox, leather, and the slightest trace of white pepper. Complex, with refined 'dusty' fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and a reserved, elegant hint of earthy cedar and dried cherries on the finish. A style of Brunello of which I never seem to grow weary. Now-2019. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, September 2011)

**91 \$44.95 (#991075) Vintages 15 October 2011 Release**

**Tenuta San Guido 2009 Guidalberto, IGT Toscana, Tuscany, Italy:** Some consider this to be the 'second wine' of Sassicaia, which is probably an accurate descriptor, as the two do have much in common in terms of flavour profile. Brilliant, dark-opaque ruby in colour, the beautiful '09 Guidalberto is finely toasted, exhibiting truly enticing aromas of slightly fragrant plums and blackberries, switching to dried mocha, black cherries, leather, forest floor, 'dusty' asphalt, and a lovely hint of incense, vanilla, and spice. Quite complex, with sturdy, unquestionably attractive fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and an elegant, appetizing hint of fragrant blackberries on the finish. Of extremely high standard, with great structure, style, and heft. Typically a blend of 45% Cabernet Sauvignon, 45% Merlot, and 10% Sangiovese. Now-2022+. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, October 2011)

**91 \$49.95 (#72439) Vintages 12 November 2011 Release**

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**Patz & Hall 2009 Pinot Noir, Sonoma Coast, California:** Known for full-bodied, high-octane wines, the bottlings of négociant winery Patz & Hall might not appeal to everybody; though there is no denying the quality of their wines. Brilliant, dark purple-ruby in colour, the 2009 Pinot Noir reveals delectable aromas of violet-rasped plums, cherries, strawberries, licorice, pain grille, incense, and spice—not to mention plenty of Pinot fruit. Complex, delivering delicate silky fruit and tannins, milder acidity, and a polished, even refined (despite 14.5% alcohol) hint of violets and raspberries on the finish. A true California style of excellent purity, clarity, and flavour. Now-2017. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, October 2011)

**91 \$47.95 (#38091) Vintages 12 November 2011 Release**

**Poggio Verrano 2005 Chance Limited Edition, IGT Maremma, Tuscany, Italy:** A Super Tuscan in virtually every sense of the word, collectors should definitely be on the lookout for the 2005 Chance. Brilliant, opaque ruby in colour, it offers a very intriguing, enticing set of aromas, starting with marvellous black fruits and roasted chestnuts, switching to leather, black coffee, tar, minerals, and a hint of vanilla and spice. Complex, with beautiful, fairly sumptuous fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and a lingering hint of rugged black plums and Viennese torte on the finish. Delicious and very well structured—an unmistakable success. Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Cabernet Franc. Now-2020+. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, September 2011)

**91 \$33.95 (#239707) Vintages 15 October 2011 Release**

**Gemma 2006 Colarej, Barolo DOCG, Piedmont, Italy:** Funny that lesser-priced Barolo sometimes falls under the radar, as if it wasn't good enough to be priced higher—all the more reason for collectors to pick up the 2006 Colarej. Brilliant, medium-dark garnet in colour, the wine offers beautiful, traditional aromas of earthy/cedary dried cherries, rose pedals, bergamot, underbrush, and a lovely hint of red plums and spice. Complex, with superb, elegant fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and a serene, refined hint of cedarwood and bergamot on the finish. Excellent, understated approach: elegant and well-structured, though perhaps not meant for serious long-term aging. Now-2019. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, October 2011)

**90++ \$34.95 (#232447) Vintages 12 November 2011 Release**

**Luce della Vite 2009 La Vite Lucente, IGT Toscana, Tuscany, Italy:** The 'second wine' of Luce, now solely owned by the Frescobaldi family, the 2009 Lucente is the latest tempting, modern offering from this successful operation. Brilliant, opaque ruby in colour, the wine is beautifully toasted, featuring enticing aromas of black mocha, currants, dark cherries, crushed rocks, licorice, leather, forest floor, vanilla, and spice. Very complex, with great fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and a well-structured, lasting hint of delicious black cherries, plums, and mocha on the finish. Unmistakably alluring, upfront style. 75% Merlot and 25% Sangiovese. Now-2020++. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, October 2011)

**90++ \$39.95 (#747030) Vintages 26 November 2011 Release**

**Château Fonroque 2008, St-Emilion Grand Cru Classé AOC, Bordeaux, France:** For the past ten years, this estate has been managed by Alain Moueix, with overall quality steadily rising with each passing vintage. Brilliant, dark-opaque ruby in colour, the 2008 Château Fonroque is finely toasted, with beautiful, slightly Provençal-like aromas of dark

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raspberried currants and plums, incense, lavender, pain grille, and a hint of dried cherries and spice. Very complex, with seriously fine fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and a lingering, more outgoing hint of raspberried currants (plus a little lavender) on the finish. Delicious, fairly modern, and robust. 85% Merlot and 15% Cabernet Franc. Now-2022+. (Julian Hitner, *The Successful Collector*, November 2011)

**90+ \$39.00 (#162362) Vintages 26 November 2011 In-Store Discoveries**

**Alejandro Fernández 2007 Pesquera Tinto Reserva, Ribera del Duero DO, Spain:** Like the other traditional designations, from Crianza to Gran Reserva, the style of the Pesquera label has always been that delicious, unexcessive extraction. And thus: brilliant, opaque ruby in colour, the 2007 Reserva is richly toasted, with beautiful multifaceted aromas of herb-infused blackberries, dried black raspberries, forest floor, anise, toasted granola, and a hint of oatmeal cookies and spice. Complex, with appetizing fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and a lingering, characterful hint of blackberries, granola, and anise on the finish. Seriously characterful, balanced, and unique. Now-2019. (Julian Hitner, *The Successful Collector*, October 2011)

**90+ \$41.95 (#323345) Vintages 26 November 2011 Release**

**Mas des Restanques 2009, Gigondas AOC, Rhône, France:** A superb Gigondas to come across, the 2009 Mas des Restanques is a wine of impressive grip, focus, and development. Brilliant, dark-opaque ruby in colour, it offers beautiful, regional aromas of baked blueberries, plums, incense, lavender, spicebox, leather, black raspberries, forest floor, and a hint of mild tar. Complex, with delicious, elegantly structured fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and a lovely hint of blueberried plums and dried incense on the finish. Lots of extraction here, yet there is no mistaking the overall quality of this first-rate wine. 75% Grenache and 25% Syrah. Now-2019++. (Julian Hitner, *The Successful Collector*, August 2011)

**90+ \$29.95 (#245662) Vintages Online Exclusives**

**Señorío de P. Peciña 2001 Reserva, Rioja DOCa, Spain:** Almost entirely old-fashioned in approach, the 2001 Reserva represents first-rate Riojan traditionalism. Brilliant, dark garnet in colour, the wine features an attractive bouquet of raisined plums, cedar, tobacco, cigar box, granola, and plenty of spice. Complex, with beautiful mature fruit, still-firm yet well integrated tannins, balanced acidity, and a superb hint of raisined plums, cedar, and tobacco on the finish. Highly impressive Rioja, though the wine will probably not last more than another five years—a wine that's crafted to drink right away, just like the old style. Now-2016. (Julian Hitner, *The Successful Collector*, October 2011)

**90 \$29.95 (#82156) Vintages 12 November 2011 Release**

**Tenuta Ponte 2003, Taurasi DOC, Campania, Italy:** In all likelihood the most famous DOC of Campania, all wines from Taurasi must contain a minimum of 85% Aglianico. Brilliant, dark ruby-red currant in colour, the 2003 Tenuta Ponte is rather cedary and savoury (unsurprising when considering the vintage), with a lovely bouquet of dried white peppery plums, dried cherries, light leather, underbrush, and spice; though also with a trace of red apples. Complex, with delicious, superb grippy fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and an elegant, rugged hint of cedary, peppery plums on the finish. Very engaging, characterful wine. Worth collectors' exploring. Now-2015+. (Julian Hitner, *The Successful Collector*, May 2011)

**90 \$39.00 (#105544) Vintages Online Exclusives**

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**Barone Ricasoli 2006 Casalferro, IGT Toscana, Tuscany, Italy:** Over the past five years, Ricasoli has continued building up its reputation as one of the most improved operations in Tuscany. Brilliant, dark-opaque ruby in colour, the 2006 Casalferro is very well toasted, delivering appealing aromas of slightly leathery mocha, baked plums, forest floor, and a hint of stewed cherries, vanilla, and spice. Complex, with robust, full-bodied fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and a lasting hint of dried mocha and 'dusty' plums on the finish. Truly well crafted, finely structured, and appetizing. Sangiovese and 'small amounts' of Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot. Now-2017++. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, April 2011)

**90 \$39.95 (#92973) Vintages 28 May 2011 Release**

**Château Ségur de Cabanac 2004, St-Estèphe AOC, Bordeaux, France:** Although I might be mistaken, I do not believe I have any prior notes from this finely regarded estate. Brilliant, dark-opaque ruby-red currant in colour, the 2004 Château de Ségur de Cabanac still shows some youthful toastiness about it, with more rugged aromas of earthy black currants and plums, scorched earth, leather, underbrush, raw coffee beans, and a hint of cedarwood and spice. Complex, with beautiful, elegantly maturing fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and a brooding, 'darkened' hint of currants and mild earthy cedarwood on the finish. Great, more traditional style. The vineyard is planted to 60% Cabernet Sauvignon and 40% Merlot. Now-2019+. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, November 2011)

**90 \$39.95 (#243287) Vintages 10 December 2011 Release**

**La Castellina 2006 Squarcialupi, Chianti Classico Riserva DOCG, Tuscany, Italy:** Splendid, very finely crafted Riserva, the 2006 Squarcialupi represents an elegant offering that collectors will want to seek out. Brilliant, dark red-garnet in colour, the wine reveals lovely, refined aromas of cedar-infused dried plums and cherries, undergrowth, delicate herbs, and a hint of leather and spice. Complex, featuring fine fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and a classy hint of cedary plums on the finish. Rather understated, yet this is precisely why it is so attractive. 90% Sangiovese, 5% Cabernet Sauvignon, and 5% Merlot. Now-2016++. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, April 2011)

**89+ \$27.95 (#214627) Vintages 28 May 2011 Release**

**Marchesi de' Frescobaldi 2009 Terre More dell'Ammiraglia, IGT Maremma, Tuscany, Italy:** New operation from the iconic Frescobaldi syndicate, the 2009 Terre More dell'Ammiraglia represents an impressive, atypical wine of patent modernity and appeal. Brilliant, opaque purple-ruby in colour, it features lovely aromas of fragrant plums, blueberries, crushed flowers, incense, kirsch, vanilla, and spice—it noses almost like a Roussillon, minus the Provençal feel. Complex, with superb fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and a polished, quality-oriented hint of plums and flowers on the finish. Tempting, though there is nothing Tuscan about this. 50% Cabernet Sauvignon, 20% Merlot, 20% Cabernet Franc, and 10% Syrah. Now-2017++. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, September 2011)

**89+ \$19.95 (#239889) Vintages 15 October 2011 Release**

**Rivera 2006 Il Falcone, Castel del Monte Riserva, Puglia, Italy:** For those unfamiliar with this Puglian DOC, Castel del Monte is located just east of Bari, of which the Il Falcone is considered the 'best example' of how reds from this area should taste.

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Brilliant, dark-opaque ruby-red currant in colour, the '06 Riserva, though somewhat idiosyncratic, displays endearing notes of leathery red plums and currants, roasted meats, undergrowth, ground herbs, balsam, and spice. Complex, with fine fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and a lovely hint of 'rustic' plums on the finish. Extremely sound, finely structured, and with a splendid flavour profile. 70% Nero di Troia and 30% Montepulciano. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, July 2011)

**89 \$22.95 (#177295) Vintages 3 September 2011 Release**

**Guasti Clemente & Figli Fonda 2005 S. Nicolao, Barbera d'Asti Superiore DOC, Piedmont, Italy:** Crafted in a more serious style, the 2005 S. Nicolao has reached a stage of very fine maturity, one of a savoury theme. Brilliant, dark red-garnet in colour, the wine displays pleasant overtones of wild game, mild cherries, herbs, and a hint of leather and spice. Good fruit on the palate, with fine tannins, balanced acidity, and a nice hint of savoury plums on the finish. A wine of lovely character and balance. Now-2014+. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, September 2011)

**88 \$21.95 (#233890) Vintages 15 October 2011 Release**

**Luigi Bosca 2008 Single Vineyard Malbec, Luján de Cuyo (Mendoza), Argentina:** Hardly a collector's wine, but this is not the point; the 2008 Single Vineyard Malbec remains a very tasty, approachable everyday red. Brilliant, dark-opaque purple-ruby in colour, the wine is nicely toasted, with somewhat (pleasingly) minty violets and currants, plums, 'rocky' leather, and a hint of vanilla and spice. Acceptably complex, with fine forward fruit, firm tannins, milder acidity, and a solid, satisfying hint of smooth plums on the finish. Nothing not to like on this one. Now-2015+. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, August 2011)

**88 \$21.95 (#74922) Vintages 1 October 2011 Release**

**Pérez Cruz 2009 Limited Edition Syrah, Maipo Alto (Maipo Valley), Chile:** Though best known for Cabernet Sauvignon, the Maipo Valley can also be a source of solid, everyday-drinking Syrah. Brilliant, opaque ruby in colour, the 2009 Limited Edition is fairly well toasted, with moderate cassis-driven notes of currants, plums, black leather, tar, licorice, and a hint of vanilla and spice. Mouthfeel: very good, satisfying fruit, firm tannins, milder acidity, and a lingering hint of currants and a little incense on the finish. In the end: solid fruit flavours and structure. Now-2016. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, August 2011)

**88 \$19.95 (#589812) Vintages 1 October 2011 Release**

**Kaiken 2007 Ultra Cabernet Sauvignon, Mendoza, Argentina:** Superior to their 'entry range' labels, the 2007 Ultra is a good, burly Cabernet Sauvignon whose tastiness makes it well-suited for purchasing. Brilliant, opaque ruby-red currant in colour, the wine is fairly well toasted, with appealing notes of baked mocha and currants, plums, tar, and the slightest hint of cedarwood, vanilla, and spice. On the palate: opulent, forward fruit at the ready, with firm tannins, milder acidity, and a hint of slightly baked currants and mocha on the finish. Well made, very tasty wine; not to be missed. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, April 2011)

**88 \$19.95 (#135202) Vintages 28 May 2011 Release**

**Feudi San Pio 2008, Valpolicella Superiore (Ripasso) DOC, Veneto, Italy:** Recommendable as a solid budget wine, the 2008 Feudi San Pio is a decent

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Ripasso to seek out. Brilliant, dark ruby in colour, it reveals pleasant notes of 'chunky' wild cherries and plums, tar, leather, and spice. Pleasing fruit showing, with firm tannins, balanced acidity, and a hint of fairly smooth wild plummy cherries on the finish. Good, acceptably made wine. It seems to have attracted the attention of many local wine writers. Now-2016+. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, October 2011)

**87 \$15.95 (#181446) Vintages 26 November 2011 Release**

**Masseria Altemura 2008 Sasseo Primitivo, IGT Salento DOC, Puglia, Italy:** Always a pleasure to come across a solid Primitivo. Brilliant, dark ruby in colour with a touch of red currant, the 2008 Sasseo is laden with tobacco that gives way to baked (dried) blueberries, mild cherries, undergrowth, and a hint of leather and spice. On the palate: decent fruit, with approachable tannins, balanced acidity, and a hint of plums, incense, and tobacco on the finish. Tasty stuff. Now-2015. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, September 2011)

**87 \$16.95 (#230573) Vintages 15 October 2011 Release**

### Sparkling Wines:

**Krug NV Grande Cuvée Brut, Champagne, France (375 mL):** Compared to the standard-sized bottle, the 375-mL format of the Grande Cuvée is just as amazing; the difference lies in the evolution of the wine, with the smaller version being noticeably more developed. Starbright, light straw in colour, it reveals truly magnificent, diverse scents of French toast, earthy truffles, pears, ginger, jasmine, pistachios, minerals, white grapefruit, and plenty of spice. Extremely complex, with stunningly crisp, luxurious fruit, brilliant acidity, and a wonderful, uncompromising hint of French toast, jasmine, and lemon on the finish. Like its standard bottling, a champagne of outstanding layering, texture, and completeness. Now-2020++. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, November 2011)

**94++ \$129.00 (#38588) Vintages Online Exclusives**

**Ruinart NV Blanc de Blancs Brut, Champagne, France:** As far as my records show, I have only tasted the Ruinart Blanc de Blancs one other time: about five years ago, having received only a tiny portion. And now that I have tasted it properly, I now realize how extraordinary this excellent bubbly can be. Starbright, pale lime in colour with a touch of straw, it offers amazingly elegant, floral-based scents of delicate brioche and pears, white grapefruit, mild jasmine, quince, lemon zest, and just a trace of ginger. Very complex, delivering marvellous, stylish fruit, polished acidity, and a richly endowed hint of pears and biscuits (very pure) on the finish. Such purity, balance, and structure—wow! Now-2022+. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, September 2011)

**93 \$89.00 (#62984) Vintages Online Exclusives**

**Ruinart NV R De Ruinart Brut, Champagne, France:** The second-oldest champagne house in existence (if you count Gosset), the R de Ruinart represents one of the finest house wines to be had. Starbright, pale straw-lime in colour, the wine offers immensely beautiful, even slightly deluxe scents of fresh biscuits, dried pears, lemon citrus, white grapefruit, pistachios, minerals, and a remarkable hint of Asian spice. Very complex, with terrific creamy yet crisp fruit and acidity, ending with a first-rate, classy hint of biscuits of lemony white grapefruit on the finish. A champagne of wonderful elegance, texture, and style. Now-2020++. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, November 2011)

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**92+ \$74.00 (#189878) Vintages Online Exclusives**

**Dessert Wine:**

**Château La Tour Blanche 2007, Sauternes AOC, Bordeaux, France (375 mL):** To my shocking surprise, I have no formal notes on any other vintages from this excellent estate, one that has improved immensely over the past twenty years. Starbright, light golden-yellow in colour the 2007 Château La Tour Blanche displays truly beautiful scents of Honey Nut Cherrios® at the start, with attractive, delicate accompaniments of lemon meringue, custard, marzipan, lemon drops, dried melon, and spice. Very complex, offering gorgeous sweet fruit, balanced acidity, and a lingering, refined hint of honeycomb and nut traces on the finish. Delicious, slightly lighter in style, though who's complaining? The vineyard is planted to 77% Sémillon, 20% Sauvignon Blanc, and 3% Muscadelle. Now-2024++. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, October 2011)

**91++ \$46.00 (#98319) Vintages 12 November 2011 In-Store Discovery**

**Fortified Wine:**

**Graham's 2001 Quinta dos Malvedos Vintage Port, Douro DOC, Portugal (375 mL):** Typically produced in years not deemed good enough to release fully-fledged vintage port, single-quinta bottlings have become recognized as an excellent substitute for the genuine article. Brilliant, opaque ruby-red currant in colour, the 2001 Quinta dos Malvedos is enticingly minty, with beautiful aromas of fruitcake, 'thick' dark plums, currants, dates, forest floor, black coffee, and spice. Very complex, with delicious, opulent fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and a lingering, refined hint of fruitcake and dates on the finish. Coming along terrifically. Now-2022++. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, August 2011)

**91 \$25.95 (#236836) Vintages 1 October 2011 Release**