

Wine Spectator Weekly

Internet Only

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GET WINE SPECTATOR RATINGS HERE FIRST—EVERY THURSDAY

This issue of *Wine Spectator Weekly* features a diverse selection of wines from long-established regions and up-and-comers alike.

James Laube highlights some of the standouts from his most recent tastings of America's favorite white, California Chardonnay. The strong 2002 vintage in Germany included several excellent Mosel-Saar-Ruwer kabinetts; Bruce Sanderson reveals some of the best. Harvey Steiman introduces winning Bordeaux varieties and Syrahs from Washington's 2001 vintage. And don't miss the week's top bottles, in Hot Wines, on page 4.

California

California has become something of a Chardonnay factory, with most appellations producing a wide range of styles, rendering great wines and those not so great, and hitting all price points. But these wines take quality up a notch or two from the norm.—J.L.

Keller

Chardonnay Sonoma Coast La Cruz Vineyard 2002
92 points | \$28 | 2,042 cases made

Firm and concentrated, it exhibits a vibrant core of ripe pear, cream, hazelnut and nutmeg flavors that fold together nicely, holding a tight focus and finishing with a long beam of ripe, juicy, lively fruit. Another excellent offering from this up-and-coming winery.—J.L.

Testarossa

Chardonnay Santa Lucia Highlands Rosella's Vineyard 2002
92 points | \$35 | 97 cases made

Deliciously complex, with a rich, fleshy, complex core of peach-, pear- and apricot-scented fruit and hints of fresh earth and new oak. The fruit shows a delicate touch of hazelnut and nutmeg on the finish.—J.L.

Au Bon Climat

Harmony Nuits-Blanches au Bouge Santa Maria Valley 2001
91 points | \$35 | 1,000 cases made

A plump, rich, creamy-textured style, with spicy

vanilla, tangerine, nectarine and hints of pear. It holds a tight focus on the ripe fruit, offering complexity and concentration. Chardonnay.—J.L.

Londer

Chardonnay Sonoma Coast Kent Ritchie Vineyard 2002
91 points | \$35 | 314 cases made

Fresh, complex scents of ripe pear, peach, fig and citrus lead to a rich, tight core of flavors shaded by nutmeg-laced oak. Firm acidity gives it a nice backbone, finishing with a flash of hazelnut.—J.L.

Sine Qua Non

Albino California 2001
91 points | \$65 | 513 cases made

A rich, full-bodied, hearty rendition of these grapes, it is ripe, plush and well-oaked, with scents of hazelnut, roasted peanuts, citrus and pretty fresh earth and floral aromas. Chardonnay, Roussanne and Viognier.—J.L.

Talbott

Chardonnay Monterey Diamond T Estate Cuvée Audrey 2001
91 points | \$75 | 300 cases made

A rich, multifaceted Chardonnay, with a beam of ripe pineapple, tropical fruit, citrus and mineral, it's tightly focused, intense and concentrated, with a long, lingering finish that reveals extra flavor dimensions.—J.L.

Hanna

Chardonnay Russian River Valley 2002
89 points | \$19 | 7,322 cases made

Clean, pure and elegant, with a mix of delicate floral, pear, peach and vanilla flavors that are complex and well-focused, finishing with a creamy aftertaste.—*J.L.*

Germany

I love the expression of Mosel Riesling. At the kabinet level of quality, one finds a seductive combination of lightness with intense flavors and underlying slate character. These vineyard-designated wines read like a who's who of Mosel-Saar-Ruwer sites. Most of them are in the \$17 to \$25 range, so they won't break the bank.—B.S.

Joh. Jos. Prüm

Riesling Kabinett Mosel-Saar-Ruwer Wehlener
Sonnenuhr 2002
92 points | \$26 | 1,600 cases made

A primer for *terroir*. This screams slate, along with peach and lime flavors, all finely matched to a delicate yet tensile structure. Terrific intensity in a light frame, ending with an aftertaste of peach and smoke.—*B.S.*

Dr. Loosen

Riesling Kabinett Mosel-Saar-Ruwer Bernkasteler Lay 2002
91 points | \$17 | 800 cases made

The floral, peach and custard aromas and flavors are interwoven with a creamy texture and set against a bright backdrop. Light, yet dense at the same time, with a long, vanilla-tinged aftertaste.—*B.S.*

Zilliken

Riesling Kabinett Mosel-Saar-Ruwer Saarbuerger Rausch 2002
91 points | \$20 | NA cases made

This has personality and flair. Exotic, showing tropical fruit, custard, lime and mineral flavors embedded in the creamy texture. Bright acidity keeps it all focused through the long finish.—*B.S.*

Karlsmühle

Riesling Kabinett Mosel-Saar-Ruwer Kaseler Nies'chen 2002
90 points | \$22 | 400 cases made

An effusive white, bursting with mango, peach and slate aromas and flavors, which are all charming and fresh, thanks to its lively structure. Fine, lingering finish.—*B.S.*

Schloss Lieser

Riesling Kabinett Mosel-Saar-Ruwer 2002
90 points | \$18 | NA cases made

A lovely floral aroma introduces this dense, backward Riesling. Despite a light-bodied profile, its herb, vanilla pastry and smoke flavors seem embedded deep within the racy structure. Fine, lingering mineral aftertaste. Best from 2006 through 2015.—*B.S.*

Joh. Jos. Prüm

Riesling Kabinett Mosel-Saar-Ruwer 2002
90 points | \$20 | 1,600 cases made

Expressive kabinet. Explosive aromas and flavors of peach, lime and stone seem suspended in air, illuminated by a vivid structure. Tangy, snappy finish.—*B.S.*

Joh. Jos. Prüm

Riesling Kabinett Mosel-Saar-Ruwer Graacher
Himmelreich 2002
90 points | \$22 | 1,600 cases made

Residual CO₂ lends a firm, airy feel to this slate- and lime-infused Riesling. Though lightweight and sleek, its flavors permeate the palate. Fine length too.—*B.S.*

C. von Schubert

Riesling Kabinett Mosel-Saar-Ruwer Maximin Grünhäuser
Abstberg 2002
90 points | \$25 | 1,000 cases made

Firm in structure and focus, this '02 Riesling evokes apple, peach and mineral aromas and flavors, with enough flesh for balance. Lightweight and lingering on the finish.—*B.S.*

J. Wegeler Erben

Riesling Kabinett Mosel-Saar-Ruwer Bernkasteler
Doctor 2002
90 points | \$37 | 85 cases made

A sleek, tightly wound kabinet, reflecting apricot and passion fruit flavors off its bright structure. Good concentration and a lingering finish, but it needs some time to really sing.—*B.S.*

J. Wegeler Erben

Riesling Kabinett Mosel-Saar-Ruwer Wehlener
Sonnenuhr 2002
90 points | \$19 | 440 cases made

Lovely flavors of peach and apricot hinting at passion fruit, all wrapped in a lush texture and kept lively by a juicy structure. Excellent length.—*B.S.*

Dr. F. Weins-Prüm

Riesling Kabinett Mosel-Saar-Ruwer Wehlener
Sonnenuhr 2002
90 points | \$19 | NA cases made

A rich, creamy Mosel kabinett, bursting with herb, vanilla custard and mineral aromas and flavors. It's supported by a lively acidity and ends with a tactile sensation.—*B.S.*

Washington

What a ripe, generous vintage 2001 was in Washington. The wines are showing wonderful flavors, and the best ones are well-mannered; they're not over-the-top blockbusters. Here's a grab bag of Washington Cabernets, Merlots and blends thereof, plus a couple of really good Syrahs.—H.S.

Three Rivers

Meritage Red Columbia Valley 2001
91 points | \$39 | 650 cases made

This blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Malbec is built for the cellar. It's rich, deep and beautifully textured, framing its ripe blueberry and currant flavors with toasty, chewy tannins, all of it lingering with a pretty floral edge. Drink now through 2010.—*H.S.*

Three Rivers

Syrah Yakima Valley Boushey Vineyards 2001
91 points | \$40 | 303 cases made

Small wineries fight to get at the grapes from this mid-Yakima Valley site. This Syrah is made in a zingy style with lots of ripe flavor, lively with acidity and dense with blueberry, plum and sage flavors up front, hinting at cocoa and espresso as the flavors persist. Needs time to settle down. Best from 2006 through 2012.—*H.S.*

Chateau Ste. Michelle

Merlot Columbia Valley Canoe Ridge Estate 2001
90 points | \$24 | 12,000 cases made

Ste. Michelle has performed well with its half of the Canoe Ridge vineyard, which faces the Columbia River just past the eastern end of the gorge. This vintage is ripe, supple and distinctive for the bay leaf and olive character running through the black cherry and roasted meat flavors, finishing with fine, firm tannins. Drink now through 2010.—*H.S.*

Chateau Ste. Michelle

Merlot Columbia Valley Cold Creek Vineyard 2001
90 points | \$33 | 5,000 cases made

The vineyard, planted in 1973, is one of the oldest in Columbia Valley, and it shows in the ripe range of flavors, just tangy enough to keep the vibrant currant and subtle spice character fresh and lively. Has grace and persistence on the finish. Drink now through 2010.—*H.S.*

Snoqualmie

Merlot Columbia Valley Joy Andersen Reserve 2001
90 points | \$23 | 1,200 cases made

The third winery in the Stimson Lane range (after Columbia Crest and Ste. Michelle) has traditionally been home to good-value wines, and the reserve line is starting to make an impression. Smoky aromas and sweet currant and plum flavors make this one attractive from the first sip, rich enough but not heavy-handed, remaining harmonious and persistent through a long finish. Fine tannins can use some cellaring. Best from 2005 through 2010.—*H.S.*

Snoqualmie

Syrah Columbia Valley Joy Andersen Reserve 2001
90 points | \$23 | 600 cases made

Another impressive reserve wine from Snoqualmie, and a tribute to winemaker Joy Anderson's handling of Syrah to make a ripe, round style. It's generous with its plum, blueberry, smoke and cream flavors, which linger enticingly on the smooth, refined finish. Drink now through 2008.—*H.S.*

Three Rivers

Cabernet Sauvignon Columbia Valley Champoux Vineyard 2001
90 points | \$39 | 175 cases made

Three Rivers gets a few Cabernet grapes from one of Washington's best Bordeaux red vineyards, and has consistently made a distinctive special bottling from it. This one is firm and spicy, with cedary oak, but is ultimately a refined wine that delivers ripe cherry and currant flavors that persist through an elegant finish, hinting at espresso as it lingers. Drink now through 2010.—*H.S.*

Kongsgaard

Chardonnay Napa Valley 2001
95 points | \$75 | 900 cases made

Remarkably bold and rich, yet elegant and refined, with tiers of complex pear, hazelnut, honeysuckle, spice and orange/citrus peel scents. Intense and concentrated, it also folds in complex mineral and sage, with a touch of marmalade. Finishes with a long, persistent aftertaste. *From California.*—J.L.

Chehalem

Pinot Noir Willamette Valley Rion Reserve 2001
93 points | \$50 | 627 cases made

Named for Patrice Rion, who consulted with Chehalem on earlier vintages, this special bottling uses only grapes from the winery's oldest vineyard, the 37-year-old Ridgecrest, on WillaKenzie soil in the Chehalem Mountains. It's one of the best wines of a very ripe vintage, supple and nicely fleshed out with rich black cherry, rose petal and pepper flavors, an open-textured red that lets everything emerge unhampered by anything resembling obvious tannins. Beautiful stuff. Drink now through 2010. *From Oregon.*—H.S.

Owen Sullivan

BSH Washington 2001
93 points | \$38 | 275 cases made

From their jury-rigged winery in a nondescript business park near Seattle-Tacoma Airport, Bill Owen and Rob Sullivan are making some of Washington's plush and headiest reds. This Cabernet Sauvignon blend (with 25 percent Merlot and 5 percent Cabernet Franc) is typically ripe, supple and graceful, plump and generous with its mocha- and spice-scented plum and black cherry, bay leaf and licorice flavors that linger intensely on the plush finish. Tannins are beautifully integrated. Drink now through 2010. *From Washington.*—H.S.

Testarossa

Chardonnay California Signature Reserve 2001
93 points | \$44 | 173 cases made

A deliciously complex and intriguing style that weaves together a rich array of ripe pear, peach, nectarine and tangerine flavors, all riding smoothly on a silky texture, ending with an elegant lift. *From California.*—J.L.

Wine Spectator's Tastings

Wine Spectator reviews more than 10,000 wines each year; our senior editors comprise the most experienced staff of professional wine tasters of any publication in the world. Each editor specializes in the wines of specific regions; their initials identify the taster of each wine reviewed.

We always taste wines blind, in our offices in San Francisco, Napa, New York and Tuscany, and in the vineyard regions of Europe. This is your guarantee that a wine's reputation or price does not influence its score. We score wines using our 100-point scale, explained below.

James Laube Senior editor, Napa
Joined Wine Spectator in 1983. Tasting beat: California

Per-Henrik Mansson Senior editor, Switzerland
Joined Wine Spectator in 1987. Tasting beat: Burgundy, Rhône Valley

Kim Marcus Managing editor, New York
Joined Wine Spectator in 1988. Tasting beat: Languedoc-Roussillon/Midi, Portugal

Wine Spectator's 100-Point Scale

95-100	Classic
90-94	Outstanding
85-89	Very Good
80-84	Good
70-79	Average
50-69	Not Recommended

Thomas Matthews Executive editor, New York
Joined Wine Spectator in 1988. Tasting beat: New York, Spain

James Molesworth Senior editor, New York
Joined Wine Spectator in 1997. Tasting beat: Loire Valley, South Africa, South America

Bruce Sanderson Tasting director, New York
Joined Wine Spectator in 1993. Tasting beat: Alsace, Austria, Champagne, Germany

Harvey Steiman Editor at large, San Francisco
Joined Wine Spectator in 1983. Tasting beat: Australia, New Zealand, Oregon, Washington

James Suckling European bureau chief, Italy
Joined Wine Spectator in 1981. Tasting beat: Bordeaux, Italy, Port

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