

# Wine Spectator Insider

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THIS week the *Wine Spectator Insider* starts off 2009 with almost three dozen outstanding wines from California, Chile and South Africa. This week's selections from California focus on James Laube's most recent Pinot Noir tastings, but also include the latest top-scoring Zinfandels reviewed by Tim Fish. For 32 more reviews of great new California Pinot Noirs, see the two WineSpectator.com California Pinot Tasting Highlights published in the past month.

From Chile, James Molesworth reviews six noteworthy new reds, including the 2006 bottlings of the popular Viña Almaviva and Concha y Toro Don Melchor Cabernets. And from South Africa, Molesworth reports it's a good news/bad news scenario: The Cape's best wines keep getting better, but prices for the Cape's best are increasing, putting them in stiff competition with the big boys from California, France, Italy and Australia. You'll find two such high-quality new Cabernet-based reds from top South Africa wineries de Trafford and Ernie Els among the Hot Wines, on page 4.

## California

### A.P. VIN

Pinot Noir Santa Lucia Highlands Rosella's Vineyard 2007  
**93 points | \$48 | 375 cases made | Red**

Pleasantly earthy, with subtle mineral, sage and a mix of blueberry and blackberry fruit that's perfumed, full-bodied, deep, rich and structured. Drink now through 2014.—J.L.

### LORING

Pinot Noir Paso Robles Russell Family Vineyard 2007  
**93 points | \$50 | 725 cases made | Red**

Tight and concentrated on full-bodied blackberry and wild berry fruit that shows a hint of mocha and spice, with floral notes and firm tannins that beg for short-term cellaring. There's a wonderful finish of pure dark fruit. Drink now through 2014.—J.L.

### LORING

Pinot Noir San Luis Obispo County  
Aubaine Vineyard 2007  
**93 points | \$50 | 350 cases made | Red**

Bright, vivid, intense and concentrated blackberry and wild berry fruit has floral and spicy edges, with a tight structured focus, firming up nicely on the finish where the tannins are full-bodied. Drink now through 2014.—J.L.

### SIDURI

Pinot Noir Santa Lucia Highlands Rosella's Vineyard 2007  
**93 points | \$49 | 730 cases made | Red**

Supple and engaging, with ripe, generous plum, black cherry, mineral, spice and subtle cedary oak nuances. This full-bodied Pinot possesses depth, concentration and complexity, with excellent balance and length. Drink now through 2015.—J.L.

### LORING

Pinot Noir Chalone Brosseau Vineyard 2007  
**92 points | \$50 | 300 cases made | Red**

Vivid, ripe plum, blueberry and blackberry fruit is ripe and well-centered, elegant, delicate and spicy. Tight and persistent, with excellent structure and depth. Needs time. Drink now through 2014.—J.L.

### LORING

Pinot Noir Santa Lucia Highlands Rosella's Vineyard 2007  
**92 points | \$50 | 750 cases made | Red**

Offers wonderful aromatics centered around plum and blueberry fruit. This is more delicate and refined on the medium- to full-bodied palate, gaining depth and complexity on the finish, where the blueberry fruit shines. Drink now through 2014.—J.L.

## SIDURI

Pinot Noir Santa Lucia Highlands 2007  
**92 points | \$33 | 623 cases made | Red**

Intense, concentrated and full-bodied, with firm yet generous plum, wild berry and black cherry fruit that's complex and focused, ending with a long, persistent finish. Drink now through 2014.—*J.L.*

## SIDURI

Pinot Noir Santa Lucia Highlands Pisoni Vineyard 2007  
**92 points | \$54 | 437 cases made | Red**

Offers broad flavors, mixing ripe plum, black cherry and blackberry fruit that's pure, rich and complex, turning elegant and supple. Full-bodied, this is long and persistent on the finish. Drink now through 2015.—*J.L.*

## TURLEY

Zinfandel Napa Valley Hayne Vineyard 2006  
**92 points | \$75 | NA cases made | Red**

Big but agile, offering bold black raspberry and smoky cracked pepper aromas, with rich yet well-structured wild berry, roasted sage and licorice flavors that build toward dense but ripe tannins. Drink now through 2015.—*T.F.*

## LORING

Pinot Noir Santa Lucia Highlands Garys' Vineyard 2007  
**91 points | \$50 | 675 cases made | Red**

Tight, focused and medium-bodied, with ripe plum and black cherry fruit that's trim and mineral, ending with a pretty burst of dark berry fruit and fine-grained tannins. Drink now through 2014.—*J.L.*

## TURLEY

Zinfandel Howell Mountain Cedarman 2006  
**91 points | \$29 | NA cases made | Red**

A full-throttle Zinfandel-big, bold and superripe. Aromas of blackberry jam, mocha and spice lead to concentrated and chunky wild berry, licorice and smoky sage flavors. The tannins are big and ripe. Drink now through 2013.—*T.F.*

## TURLEY

Zinfandel Napa Valley Moore Earthquake Vineyard 2006  
**91 points | \$48 | NA cases made | Red**

Young and untamed, but that's the appeal. Offers lively aromas of wild berry, smoky oak and spice aromas that open to layered, zesty plum, pomegranate and licorice notes. The tannins are ripe but rustic. Best from 2010 through 2015.—*T.F.*

# Chile

## VIÑA ALMAVIVA

Puente Alto 2006  
**93 points | \$85 | 12,500 cases made | Red**

Muscular and broad-shouldered, with lots of bittersweet cocoa, dark currant and braised fig notes, followed by a long, loam- and coffee-filled finish. There's also plenty of iron-tinged grip for the cellar. Cabernet Sauvignon, Carmenère, Cabernet Franc and Merlot. Best from 2010 through 2015.—*J.M.*

## VIÑEDO CHADWICK

Maipo Valley 2006  
**93 points | \$180 | 150 cases imported | Red**

A big, dense wine, especially for the vintage, with an impressive core of loam, melted black licorice and macerated currant fruit supported by ripe, well-embedded tannins and a long, polished finish that drips with fruit and minerality. Back on form after the subpar 2005. Cabernet Sauvignon. Drink now through 2013.—*J.M.*

## VIÑA ERRÁZURIZ

Don Maximiano Founder's Reserve  
Aconcagua Valley 2006  
**91 points | \$90 | 400 cases imported | Red**

Muscular and grippy, but also polished and pure, with a solid beam of red and black currant fruit laced with mocha, tobacco and mineral notes. Bacony toast emerges on the finish. Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Petit Verdot and Shiraz. Best from 2010 through 2013.—*J.M.*

## VIÑA ERRÁZURIZ

Carmenère Aconcagua Valley Kai 2006  
**90 points | \$80 | 110 cases imported | Red**

Toasty but well-integrated, with mocha and cocoa leading the way for dark fig, currant and black cherry fruit. Licorice and briar notes check in on the full-bodied finish. Shows admirable ripeness and grip for a Carmenère. Drink now through 2010.—*J.M.*

## VIÑA VENTISQUERO

Syrah Colchagua Valley Pangea Apalta Vineyards 2005  
**90 points | \$55 | 1,000 cases made | Red**

Offers solid muscle and depth for the vintage, with blackberry, fig, bittersweet cocoa and melted licorice notes backed by a briar- and tobacco-tinged finish. Not as polished as the debut 2004, but should settle in nicely with moderate cellaring. Drink now through 2010.—*J.M.*

# South Africa

## DE TRAFFORD

Shiraz Stellenbosch 2006  
**93 points | \$70 | 42 cases imported | Red**

Dark and winey, with a tangy edge to the black currant, raspberry ganache, blackberry, licorice and fig bread notes. Long and juicy through the dense but sleek finish, with impressive underlying grip. Drink now through 2011.—*J.M.*

## HAMILTON RUSSELL

Pinot Noir Hemel-en-Aarde Valley 2007  
**93 points | \$44 | 950 cases imported | Red**

Bold, aromatic and ripe, but imminently elegant, with racy acidity providing the ground wire for the rich black cherry, bramble, incense and sweet earth notes. Long, multi-faceted finish. The HR Pinot is quietly getting better and better. Drink now through 2013.—*J.M.*

## MR MVEMVE RAATS

De Compostella Stellenbosch 2006

**93 points | \$100 | 50 cases imported | Red**

Burly, muscular style, with chestnut, dark cocoa and braised fig notes held in check by firm, but ripe tannins. Very streamlined finish with great buried acidity lets hints of cassis and graphite lurk underneath along with a vibrant maduro tobacco note. It's all there for cellaring. Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Petit Verdot, Malbec and Merlot. Best from 2010 through 2014.—*J.M.*

## RUST EN VREDE

1694 Classification Stellenbosch 2006

**93 points | \$110 | 100 cases imported | Red**

Impressive, large-scaled wine that offers loads of currant paste, braised fig, beef, roasted earth, tar and graphite notes, all backed by grilled herb, aged tobacco and bittersweet cocoa on the finish. Very dense, but the fruit and tug of earth should merge fully with cellaring. Shiraz and Cabernet Sauvignon. Best from 2010 through 2013.—*J.M.*

## CIRRUS

Syrah Stellenbosch 2006

**92 points | \$58 | 750 cases imported | Red**

Packed, with densely wound braised fig, dark licorice, espresso and currant preserve notes, held back for now by notes of bittersweet cocoa and dark toast. Long, graphite- and white-pepper filled finish shows the early hints of definition that should emerge fully with some moderate cellaring. Now all Stellenbosch fruit for this improving label from Jean Engelbrecht of Rust en Vrede. Drink now through 2011.—*J.M.*

## DE TRAFFORD

Cabernet Sauvignon Stellenbosch 2005

**92 points | \$40 | 240 cases imported | Red**

Fleshy and muscular, with lots of crushed plum, currant preserve and fig paste notes laid over bittersweet cocoa, graphite and espresso hints. There's a long, rock-solid finish. Drink now through 2012.—*J.M.*

## THELEMA

Cabernet Sauvignon Stellenbosch 2006

**92 points | \$41 | 500 cases imported | Red**

Ripe and focused, with alluring mint and cocoa notes up front, followed by velvety tannins that carry dark currant, warm fig sauce and coffee notes through the long finish. There's impressive latent grip as well. Drink now through 2012.—*J.M.*

## THELEMA

Cabernet Sauvignon Stellenbosch The Mint 2006

**92 points | \$45 | 70 cases imported | Red**

Sleek and reserved, with a gorgeous mint- and cocoa-filled nose followed by velvety, fine-grained tannins that support the dark plum and macerated currant fruit. The long, silky finish lets the ripe fruit linger with style. Drink now through 2012.—*J.M.*

## BOUCHARD FINLAYSON

Pinot Noir Walker Bay Galpin Peak 2007

**91 points | \$44 | 150 cases imported | Red**

Very stylish, with long, lingering notes of black cherry, spice and sweet earth that are suave and fine-grained. Lovely acidity and minerality ripples underneath, adding complexity and length. The best bottling yet from this Pinot specialist. Drink now through 2011.—*J.M.*

## DE TRAFFORD

Shiraz Stellenbosch Blueprint 2006

**91 points | \$35 | 140 cases imported | Red**

Has a rustic undertow, but plenty of dark, ripe fig and blackberry fruit flavors as well, which offset the coffee and briar notes nicely. There's a lingering note of Black Forest cake on the slightly muscular finish. Drink now through 2011.—*J.M.*

## FINLAYSON FAMILY

GS Stellenbosch 2006

**91 points | \$55 | 10 cases imported | Red**

Muscular and juicy, offering dark plum, blackberry and currant fruit backed by a mouthwatering, briary edge. There's solid underlying grip, with coffee and graphite hints on the finish. Needs a little time to settle in. Cabernet Sauvignon, named in homage to the George Spies Cabernets from '66 and '68. Best from 2009 through 2011.—*J.M.*

## KEN FORRESTER

Syrah-Grenache Stellenbosch The Gypsy 2005

**91 points | \$65 | 250 cases imported | Red**

Restrained now, but with a large core of fleshy-textured black currant, fig and bittersweet cocoa notes, backed by ample, fine-grained tannins and a long, dense finish where toast and white pepper notes check in. Rich, but not at all bombastic. Offers fine cellaring potential. Drink now through 2011.—*J.M.*

## KANONKOP

Cabernet Sauvignon Simonsberg-Stellenbosch 2003

**91 points | \$33 | 110 cases imported | Red**

Ripe and juicy, but nicely focused, with alluring fig paste, black tea, incense and hoisin sauce notes carried by supple tannins. The long finish lets all the flavors play out, with nice buried acidity. The best Cabernet in a while from this Pinotage specialist. Drink now through 2011.—*J.M.*

## MULDERBOSCH

Faithful Hound Stellenbosch 2005

**90 points | \$22 | 2,200 cases imported | Red**

Smoky, with incense and coffee aromas up front, followed by a focused palate of red currant, crushed plum and boysenberry fruit, all layered with additional cocoa, grilled herb and mineral notes. The long finish lets both the fruit and herb notes linger. Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Petit Verdot, Malbec and Cabernet Franc. This is back on the beam after some lighter-weight vintages. Drink now through 2011.—*J.M.*

# HOT WINES

These are the most exciting discoveries from our editors' most recent tastings, published exclusively in *Wine Spectator Insider*. They are high-scoring, low-production wines from around the world that may be difficult to find, but are worth seeking out.

## A.P. VIN

Pinot Noir Santa Lucia Highlands Garys' Vineyard 2007  
**94 points | \$48 | 350 cases made | Red**

Beautifully crafted, ripe, rich, supple, elegant and balanced, offering fleshy plum, blueberry and blackberry flavors that are pure and focused, ending with a nice minerally edge that offers even greater depth. Drink now through 2014. *From California.—J.L.*

## CONCHA Y TORO

Cabernet Sauvignon Puente Alto Don Melchor 2006  
**94 points | \$80 | 8,600 cases imported | Red**

A dark, muscular style, with black currant, braised fig, maduro tobacco, bittersweet cocoa and loam notes that all roll together through the dense but polished finish. There's impressive power for the vintage, along with precision and balance. Drink now through 2018. *From Chile.—J.M.*

## DE TRAFFORD

Elevation 393 Stellenbosch 2005  
**94 points | \$100 | 25 cases imported | Red**

This offers plenty of dark toast, braised fig and cocoa powder notes backed by a solid core of currant paste and plum sauce. The long, velvety finish has lots of power, but the tannins are fine-grained and thoroughly embedded. Terrific acidity is buried deep as well. An impressive combination of power, balance and elegance. Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Shiraz. Best from 2010 through 2014. *From South Africa.—J.M.*

## ERNIE ELS WINES

Stellenbosch 2005  
**94 points | \$95 | 400 cases imported | Red**

Concentrated and very polished, with layers of black mission fig, currant confiture, maduro tobacco, black tea and mocha-infused toast all gliding over supersupple tannins. Very long and poised. Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Petit Verdot, Malbec and Cabernet Franc. Drink now through 2012. *From South Africa.—J.M.*

## WINE SPECTATOR'S TASTERS

### The Most Experienced Team of Wine Journalists in the World

*Wine Spectator's* tasting staff includes 14 people in four offices. They work together to review more than 15,000 wines each year, more than any other publication. Together, our seven senior tasters count more than 140 years of tasting experience.

We always taste wine blind in our offices in San Francisco, Napa, New York and Tuscany, and in the vineyard regions of Europe. This is your guarantee that our reviews are fair and objective, and that a wine's reputation or price does not influence its score. Each editor specializes in the wines of specific regions; their initials identify the taster of each wine reviewed. We score wines using the 100-point scale, explained below.

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Joined *Wine Spectator* in 1988. Tasting beat:  
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**Thomas Matthews** Executive editor, New York  
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**James Molesworth** Senior editor, New York  
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**James Suckling** European bureau chief, Italy  
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**Jo Cooke** (Veneto),  
**Tim Fish** (California),  
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#### Wine Spectator's 100-Point Scale

95-100	Classic
90-94	Outstanding
85-89	Very good
80-84	Good
75-79	Mediocre
50-74	Not recommended