

# Wine Spectator Insider

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**TEN CLASSIC-RATED NAPA AND SONOMA REDS AND WHITES**—from Chardonnay to Zinfandel—make this week's *Wine Spectator Insider* a must-read for California wine lovers. Five classic Sonoma Chardonnays from Aubert lead this report, but there are excellent reds as well, including Napa Cabernets from Paul Hobbs, PlumpJack and Bialla, and new Seghesio Zinfandels.

Rounding out this issue, and outstanding in their own right, are a dozen Syrahs and blends from Washington. See some of the best of this edition, the Hot Wines, on page 4.

## CALIFORNIA

### AUBERT

Chardonnay Carneros Larry Hyde & Sons 2009  
**95 points | \$80 | 633 cases made | White**

Sleek and refined, with spicy citrus, pithy lemon peel, anise, smoked fig and roasted marshmallow flavors, gaining depth and persistence on the long, detailed finish. Drink now through 2018.—*J.L.*

### AUBERT

Chardonnay Sonoma Coast Reuling Vineyard 2009  
**95 points | \$80 | 411 cases made | White**

Firm, tight and concentrated, with a beam of ripe pear, anise, honeydew melon, brioche and nutmeg flavors. Firms nicely, unfolding with layers of complexity. Drink now through 2018.—*J.L.*

### AUBERT

Chardonnay Sonoma Coast UV-SL Vineyard 2009  
**95 points | \$80 | 378 cases made | White**

Deliciously rich and layered, showing bold fig, honeydew melon and apricot flavors, with more subtle hints of citrus, mineral, crème brûlée and cedar. Deftly balanced, ripe and expressive, without weight. Drink now through 2018.—*J.L.*

### BIALLA

Proprietor's Limited Release Napa Valley 2009  
**95 points | \$150 | 50 cases made | Red**

Deliciously dense, pure, rich and polished, this beautifully focused red offers tiers of supple currant, red berry, blackberry and red and black licorice, with a long, gliding finish where the flavors are woven together in a seamless fashion. Tempting now. Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot. Best from 2012 through 2026.—*J.L.*

### BEHRENS FAMILY

Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley Cemetery 2009  
**94 points | \$105 | 175 cases made | Red**

Engagingly supple, complex and layered, with roasted coffee notes that show subtle touches of currant, plum, tobacco and black licorice. Full-bodied, yet unfolds ever so gracefully, turning silky on the finish. Drink now through 2022.—*J.L.*

### FLOWERS

Chardonnay Sonoma Coast Moon Select 2009  
**94 points | \$70 | 400 cases made | White**

A delightfully fragrant, rich, yet elegant and delicate expression of ripe peach, honeysuckle and spice. Impressive for its lithe body, persistence and depth. Fun and refreshing to drink. Drink now through 2018.—*J.L.*

### PAUL HOBBS

Chardonnay Russian River Valley Ulises Valdez Vineyard 2009  
**94 points | \$70 | 225 cases made | White**

Beautifully crafted, rich and layered, with a steady lift of creamy fig, juicy peach, honeydew, honeysuckle, anise and light toasty, vanilla-laced oak strutting its stuff on the finish, where the flavors are long and persistent. Drink now through 2018.—*J.L.*

## PAUL HOBBS

Chardonnay Sonoma Mountain Cuvée Agustina Richard Dinner Vineyard 2009  
**94 points | \$100 | 159 cases made | White**

A seamless expression of ripe, layered fig, melon, ripe peach and grilled fig flavors that show touches of roasted marshmallow. Full-bodied, yet dances along, ending with a long, layered finish, reverberating with flavor. Drink now through 2018.—*J.L.*

## PAUL HOBBS

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Lindsay Estate Vineyard 2009  
**94 points | \$85 | 328 cases made | Red**

An elegant, graceful young Pinot, with perfumed ripe plum, blackberry, raspberry and cherry fruit. Full-bodied, ending with a long, tapered finish and a pleasantly subtle tannic backbone. Drink now through 2019.—*J.L.*

## RELIC

Ritual Napa Valley 2009  
**94 points | \$48 | 460 cases made | Red**

Dense and powerful, with firm road tar, black licorice, blackberry, smoke and ripe berry flavors. Full-blown, deep and persistent, long and layered, promising even more in a year or two. Mourvèdre, Grenache, Carignane, Syrah and Petite Sirah. Best from 2012 through 2022.—*J.L.*

## DEHLINGER

Zinfandel Dry Creek Valley Guadagni Bros. Vineyard 2009  
**93 points | \$30 | 700 cases made | Red**

The rare Zinfandel with focus and structure, offering aromas of wild berry and pepper, with complex flavors of baked black cherry and smoky spice. Drink now through 2017.—*T.F.*

## HALL

Cabernet Sauvignon Mount Veeder Segassia Vineyard 2008  
**93 points | \$150 | 171 cases made | Red**

Offers a mix of ripe berry and cherry pie, espresso, loamy earth and sage-underbrush notes. Full-bodied and notably polished and graceful for a Mount Veeder Cabernet, this is well-balanced, focused, pure and persistent. All in all, an excellent wine. Best from 2012 through 2024.—*J.L.*

## HALL

Exzellenz Sacrashe Vineyard Rutherford 2008  
**93 points | \$165 | 219 cases made | Red**

Exhibits potent dark berry fruit, with jazzy oak, spice and mineral notes, yet features subtle touches of blueberry, blackberry and melted chocolate, ending with a long, full, deep, persistent finish that reverberates with roasted espresso. Best from 2012 through 2026.—*J.L.*

## PAUL HOBBS

Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley Stagecoach Vineyard 2008  
**93 points | \$150 | 252 cases made | Red**

Sleek and polished up front, with a rich core of spicy currant, mineral, loamy earth and floral scents, this is deceptively tannic and muscular in a positive way on the finish, so even as you chew through it, the flavors glide along gracefully. Best from 2013 through 2024.—*J.L.*

## ROBERT MONDAVI

Chardonnay Napa Valley Reserve 2008  
**93 points | \$40 | 1,630 cases made | White**

Fresh and snappy, with lively citrus, apple pie, and honeysuckle notes, this is medium- to full-bodied, gaining depth and texture and ending with a chorus of delicate fruit flavors. Drink now through 2018.—*J.L.*

## NEWTON

Chardonnay Napa County Unfiltered 2008  
**93 points | \$60 | 12,000 cases made | White**

A very distinctive and exotic style that's well-executed. Ultrarich and creamy, offering a medley of butterscotch, fig, roasted marshmallow and honeysuckle flavors, ending with a lingering finish. Drink now through 2015.—*J.L.*

## QUIXOTE

Petite Syrah Napa Valley Stags' Leap Ranch 2008  
**93 points | \$90 | 1,228 cases made | Red**

Powerful, with vivid blueberry and blackberry notes at the core, this packs plenty of flavor and gusto into its smooth, integrated package. Espresso, mesquite, graphite, spice box and gingerbread flavors are an intriguing combination, and the dense tannins never get in the way. Drink now through 2020.—*M.W.*

## FLOWERS

Chardonnay Sonoma Coast Camp Meeting Ridge 2009  
**92 points | \$58 | 750 cases made | White**

Sleek and elegant, with ripe, well-defined, subtle pear, honeydew and honeysuckle notes that sit easy on the palate, with enticing flavors that linger. Drink now through 2018.—*J.L.*

## GREG LINN WINES

Chardonnay Sonoma Coast Gap's Crown 2009  
**92 points | \$69 | 350 cases made | White**

Fresh, clean and complex, with aromas of honeysuckle, fig, pear and melon that lead to a medium- to full-bodied palate, ending with a graceful interplay of subtle white peach flavors. Drink now through 2018.—*J.L.*

## SEGHESIO

Zinfandel Sonoma County Old Vine 2009  
**92 points | \$38 | 9,000 cases made | Red**

Ripe but well-structured, with wild berry and licorice aromas and rich, layered flavors of plum and smoked pepper that are balanced with a great backbone of acidity and tannins. Drink now through 2017.—*T.F.*

## BIALLA

Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley 2009  
**91 points | \$125 | 400 cases made | Red**

Young, complex aromas of cedar, floral and berry scents are focused and pure, folding over nicely to the palate, where touches of green olive, herb, underbrush and espresso add dimension. Best from 2012 through 2024.—*J.L.*

# WASHINGTON

## DOYENNE

Syrah Yakima Valley Signature 2008  
**94 points | \$40 | 1,400 cases made | Red**

Focused, intense and detailed, with layers of flavor on a taut, lively frame. Offers star anise, tar, floral and dried sage overtones to the blackberry, Italian plum and espresso flavors, lingering enticingly on the energetic finish. Best from 2013 through 2018.—*H.S.*

## GORMAN

Syrah Red Mountain The Pixie 2009  
**94 points | \$45 | 200 cases made | Red**

Firm in texture and explosive in flavor, with plenty of vibrant blackberry, black cherry and black pepper flavors to push through the layer of fine-grained tannins. Finishes with beguiling freshness and vitality. Best from 2013 through 2019.—*H.S.*

## SYNCLINE

Syrah Red Mountain Ciel Du Cheval Vineyard 2009  
**94 points | \$50 | 70 cases made | Red**

Dark and dense, delivering a brooding maelstrom of blackberry, dark plum and rosemary flavors. Finishes with sweet espresso notes that don't quit. The tannins are polished, and the finish just won't let go. Drink now through 2017.—*H.S.*

## BETZ

Syrah Yakima Valley La Côte Patriarche Red Willow Vineyard 2009  
**93 points | \$55 | 290 cases made | Red**

Firm and spicy, this intense red bristles with smoky, tarry overtones around a core of blackberry and licorice flavors, persisting nicely against refined tannins. With all that's going on, the flavors have a welcome transparency. Best from 2013 through 2018.—*H.S.*

## OWEN ROE

Syrah Columbia Valley Ex Umbris 2009  
**93 points | \$24 | 4,982 cases made | Red**

Supple and round, this red is layered with plum, currant, saffras, cream and spice flavors that keep sailing through the long, vivid finish. This has style and grace to go with its undeniable power. Drink now through 2018.—*H.S.*

## OWEN ROE

Syrah Yakima Valley Chapel Block 2009  
**93 points | \$55 | 117 cases made | Red**

Dense and juicy, with lots of ripe flavors balancing against lively acidity, making the licorice-accented blackberry, boysenberry and dark plum notes pop. The finish lingers effectively, hinting at mineral character. Best from 2013 through 2018.—*H.S.*

## SAVIAH

Syrah Walla Walla Valley 2008  
**93 points | \$32 | 217 cases made | Red**

Dark and distinctive, brimming with black olive, tar and grilled meat accents around a dense core of blackberry and black cherry flavors. A wine of depth and persistence. Drink now through 2018.—*H.S.*

## BUNNELL

À Pic Stonetree Vineyard Wahluke Slope 2008  
**92 points | \$34 | 402 cases made | Red**

Smooth and ripe, with a green olive accent to the ripe blackberry, coffee and tar flavors, mingling easily on the refined texture of the finish. Syrah, Grenache, Mourvèdre, Cinsault and Petite Sirah. Drink now through 2017.—*H.S.*

## DARBY

Syrah Columbia Valley The Dark Side 2008  
**92 points | \$25 | 400 cases made | Red**

Supple, round and distinctive for its cinnamon- and fig-accented blackberry and cherry flavors, finishing on a smoky note. There's a savory feel to the aftertaste. Drink now through 2016.—*H.S.*

## NOVELTY HILL

Syrah Columbia Valley Stillwater Creek Vineyard 2008  
**92 points | \$28 | 163 cases made | Red**

Savory nuances of spice, smoke and black pepper weave through a plush core of plum and blackberry fruit, the finish turning dark and distinctive. This has poise and length. Drink now through 2018.—*H.S.*

## RASA

Syrah Walla Walla Valley Principia Reserve 2008  
**92 points | \$85 | 115 cases made | Red**

Dark, dense and brooding, offering a cauldron of meaty black olive and smoke notes around a deep core of dried cherry and fresh currant flavors. There's plenty of depth. Just needs to develop some lift. Best from 2013 through 2016.—*H.S.*

## SEQUEL

Syrah Columbia Valley 2008  
**91 points | \$50 | 1,025 cases made | Red**

Firm in texture and dark in flavor, this is tightly wound with tannins. The pieces are there for this to come together, but needs time for its blackberry and smoke flavors to shed their straitjacket. Best after 2013.—*H.S.*

# HOT WINES

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

## AUBERT

Chardonnay Sonoma Coast Ritchie Vineyard 2009  
**96 points | \$80 | 1,553 cases made | White**

A rich yet subtle style that serves up bold fig, honeydew, apricot and savory flavors that are full-bodied and tapered, at points both silky and mineral, ending with a fabulous burst of fruit. Drink now through 2018. *From California.—J.L.*

## AUBERT

Chardonnay Sonoma Coast Lauren 2009  
**95 points | \$90 | 959 cases made | White**

Ultrarich and deeply concentrated, this is intense, persistent and graceful, with layers of ripe fig, honeydew melon, anise, sage and melted black licorice. Gets more complex and interesting with every sip. Best from 2012 through 2020. *From California.—J.L.*

## DECADES 5

Petit Verdot Napa Valley Stagecoach Vineyard 2008  
**95 points | \$145 | 125 cases made | Red**

Rich and juicy, offering ripe, vivid, mineral- and cedar-laced black-berry fruit, with melted black licorice, that's expansive and plush, yet with a firm backbone and chewy, detailed tannins. If only all Petit Verdots were this sumptuous. Drink now through 2025. *From California.—J.L.*

## PAUL HOBBS

Cabernet Sauvignon Oakville Beckstoffer  
To Kalon Vineyard 2008  
**95 points | \$235 | 365 cases made | Red**

A graceful, refined effort that offers a supple, polished mix of currant, plum and black cherry flavors, with loamy earth, spice, mineral and crème de cassis notes. Full-bodied and notably refined, this firms nicely on the finish, revealing more cedary, woody touches. Best from 2014 through 2027. *From California.—J.L.*

## PLUMPJACK

Cabernet Sauvignon Oakville McWilliams  
Oakville Vineyard Reserve 2008  
**95 points | \$200 | 500 cases made | Red**

Firm, tight and chewy, with rich, extracted, minty currant, black-berry, sage, cedar, roasted coffee and floral notes. Full-bodied, gaining depth and nuance all the way. Ends with a long, detailed, persistent finish that only promises better things to come. Best from 2012 through 2024. *From California.—J.L.*

## SEGHESIO

Zinfandel Alexander Valley Home Ranch 2009  
**95 points | \$38 | 2,500 cases made | Red**

A Zinfandel that has it all—rich, ripe flavors, good structure and acidity, and lots of personality. Offers aromas of cherry pie and licorice that lead to complex flavors of huckleberry, toasty vanilla and smoky cracked pepper. Drink now through 2017. *From California.—T.F.*

## WINE SPECTATOR'S TASTERS

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*Wine Spectator's* tasting staff includes 12 people in two offices. They work together to review more than 18,000 wines each year, more than any other publication. Together, our six senior tasters count more than 140 years of tasting experience.

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Joined *Wine Spectator* in 1983. Tasting beat:  
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**Kim Marcus** Managing editor, New York  
Joined *Wine Spectator* in 1988. Tasting beat:  
Austria, Greece, Port, Portugal, Southern France

#### 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 |

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

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