

Wine Spectator Insider

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A Members-Only, Weekly Publication

THE *Wine Spectator Insider* features more than three dozen exceptional wines this week—six of them earning classic scores—from California, France and Germany. James Laube reviews a new batch of 2006 Rhône-style California reds to start off this issue, most of them from the increasingly impressive 2006 vintage. This week's top-scoring California wine, however, is a late-release 2004 Syrah that earned 98 points; you'll find it among the Hot Wines, on page 4.

Also in this edition, James Molesworth reviews nine new releases from France's Rhône Valley. The top-scoring Rhône wines in this report come from Cornas, but don't miss the excellent value Côtes du Rhône at 90 points and \$16 either. Finally, Bruce Sanderson covers 2007 German Rieslings. For more on the vintage and additional 2007 auslese reviews, see Sanderson's Dec. 12 WineSpectator.com Tasting Highlights. The *Insider* will not be published Wednesday, Dec. 24, but watch for the Dec. 31 year-end wrap up the following week.

California

SAXUM

Booker Vineyard Paso Robles 2006
94 points | \$55 | 350 cases made | Red

Bold, ripe, intense and vibrant, with a full-throttle core of dark berry fruit that's rich, focused and full-bodied, offering blackberry, wild berry, plum and black cherry, picking up spice, flora, tar and black licorice flavors in spades. Syrah. Drink now through 2015.—J.L.

JC CELLARS

Syrah Arroyo Seco Ventana Vineyard 2006
93 points | \$30 | 321 cases made | Red

Firm, grapey wild berry and raspberry join pepper, spice, mineral and cedar in a full-bodied expression of Syrah, with hints of pepper, bay leaf, black licorice and mineral. Firms up nicely on the finish. Drink now through 2014.—J.L.

SAXUM

Heart Stone Vineyard Paso Robles 2006
93 points | \$55 | 390 cases made | Red

Intense and powerful, with ripe, focused plum, blackberry and wild berry fruit that's shaded by pepper and nutmeg flavors. Full-bodied, dense and chewy, with pleasantly earthy tannins. Syrah, Grenache and Mourvèdre. Drink now through 2014.—J.L.

TABLAS CREEK

Esprit de Beaucastel Paso Robles 2006
93 points | \$45 | 3,500 cases made | Red

Well-balanced, intense yet elegant. Full-bodied, showing vivid blueberry and wild berry flavors, with hints of nutmeg, cedar and coconut. Ends with a long, complex finish that shows a pleasant loamy, earthy quality. Mourvèdre, Grenache, Syrah and Counoise. Drink now through 2014.—J.L.

DUMOL

Syrah Russian River Valley 2006
92 points | \$54 | 1,930 cases made | Red

A robust mouthful that serves up a rich, complex mix of ripe currant, herb and tar notes, with earthy, leathery scents, that are full-blown and gaining weight. Intense and concentrated, this needs cellaring. Best from 2010 through 2016.—J.L.

SAXUM

Bone Rock James Berry Vineyard Paso Robles 2006
92 points | \$75 | 450 cases made | Red

A tasty mouthful of Syrah, this is full-bodied and concentrated, rich and plush, with layers of ripe blackberry, wild berry, mineral and graphite, ending with a long, persistent finish that keeps repeating the dark berry themes. Syrah, Mourvèdre and Grenache. Drink now through 2014.—J.L.

SAXUM

James Berry Vineyard Paso Robles 2006
92 points | \$55 | 900 cases made | Red

Pushes the pedal on ripeness, touching on jammy, full-blown and concentrated. Blackberry, graphite, plum jam and wild berry fruit is mouthcoating, as are the tannins. With air, gains a measure of finesse. Syrah, Grenache and Mourvèdre. Drink now through 2014.—*J.L.*

DUMOL

Syrah Russian River Valley Eddie's Patch 2006
91 points | \$76 | 370 cases made | Red

Intense and spicy, offering pepper, sage, wild berry and blackberry notes, with leathery scents, that are tight, focused and full-bodied. The flavors are slow to unfold, but as they do they reveal extra subtle nuances and fine-grained tannins. Best from 2010 through 2016.—*J.L.*

JC CELLARS

Syrah Napa Valley Isabel Stagecoach Vineyard 2006
91 points | \$65 | 252 cases made | Red

Firm, intense and full-bodied, offering tight spice, mineral and sage, with ripe blackberry, wild berry and black licorice fruit as this holds its focus, ending with chewy, leathery tannins and a loamy earth edge. Drink now through 2016.—*J.L.*

TORRIN

The Maven James Berry Vineyard Paso Robles 2006
91 points | \$65 | 65 cases made | Red

Serves up a complex mix of blackberry, wild berry and loganberry fruit that's intense, full-bodied, supple and balanced, ending with a burst of dark berry fruit and fine-grained tannins. Grenache and Syrah. Drink now through 2014.—*J.L.*

KUNIN

Syrah Santa Barbara County 2005
90 points | \$28 | 650 cases made | Red

Smooth and silky, with distinct huckleberry, boysenberry and mocha notes. Full-bodied and seductive, ending with a tight focus and a long, persistent finish. Drink now through 2014.—*J.L.*

TOR

Grenache Bennett Valley Rock Cuvee Cooper Judge Family Vineyard 2006
90 points | \$53 | 125 cases made | Red

Supple, elegant and full-bodied, with a tasty mix of black cherry, plum, nutmeg, mineral and sandalwood notes, ending with fine-grained tannins. Approachable now. Drink now through 2014.—*J.L.*

ZEPALTAS

Syrah Santa Lucia Highlands Rosella's Vineyard 2006
90 points | \$48 | 96 cases made | Red

Full-bodied, firm and spicy, with a peppery rustic edge to the wild berry and dried currant. But this gains complexity and nuance, aided by a mineral and iron edge of earthiness. Well-structured. Drink now through 2013.—*J.L.*

France Rhône

THIERRY ALLEMAND

Cornas Chaillot 2005
94 points | \$80 | NA cases made | Red

Really dark, grippy style, with boysenberry and macerated currant fruit laced with pastis, violet and iron notes. Long, structured finish is pushed by a bright iron note and superfresh acidity. Hard to resist now, but will only blossom more with time. Best from 2010 through 2022.—*J.M.*

JEAN-LUC COLOMBO

Cornas Les Ruchets 2006
94 points | \$100 | 185 cases imported | Red

Really packed, this modern styled Cornas drips with fig, plum sauce, melted licorice and pastis notes, while the iron and loam notes rumble underneath. Long finish seems plush, but is loaded with latent grip. Should cruise in the cellar. Best from 2010 through 2022.—*J.M.*

JEAN-LUC COLOMBO

Cornas La Louvée 2006
93 points | \$100 | 135 cases imported | Red

Really focused, with a tightly wound core of macerated cherry and currant fruit mingling with olive, *garrigue* and freshly roasted coffee bean notes. Long and racy, with a great tug of earth on the plum-filled finish. Best from 2010 through 2020.—*J.M.*

YVES CUILLERON

Cornas Les Vires 2006
93 points | \$NA | 290 cases made | Red

Lilting and perfumy, especially for Cornas, with sweet tapenade, crushed flower and macerated plum notes backed by incense and spice hints. Long, mouthwatering finish has surprising elegance with an iron note reverberating prominently. Great combination of *terroir* and vigneron style. Drink now through 2020.—*J.M.*

YVES CUILLERON

Syrah Vin de Pays des Collines Rhodaniennes Les Candives 2007
90 points | \$27 | 1,000 cases made | Red

Silky and pure, with violet, plum and black cherry notes kissed by a touch of cocoa powder on the fine-grained finish. Very tasty. Drink now.—*J.M.*

YVES CUILLERON

Syrah Vin de Pays des Collines Rhodaniennes Ligné 2007
90 points | \$30 | 583 cases made | Red

Taut, tangy, mineral-driven style, with racy black cherry, iron and floral notes backed by a nice sanguine hint on the finish. Drink now.—*J.M.*

R. GASSIER

Costières de Nîmes Lou Coucardié Red 2006
90 points | \$38 | 400 cases made | Red

Maturing, with plum cake and mocha notes up front, followed by black cherry, blackberry and licorice notes woven with an alluring incense hint. Long, solid finish. Drink now through 2010.—*J.M.*

ST.-COSME

Côtes du Rhône 2007
90 points | \$16 | 1,500 cases imported | Red

Nice wild aromas of garrigue and olive give way to a silky palate of dark plum, loganberry and iron notes. Long, fleshy finish. Nice character-filled wine. Drink now through 2010.—*J.M.*

Germany

GEORG BREUER

Riesling Auslese Gold Cap Rheingau Berg
Schlossberg 2007
94 points | \$130/375ml | 29 cases made | White

An impressive, botrytized auslese, featuring honey, apricot, almond and candied lemon on a rapierlike structure. Well balanced. A tight coil now, this will take years to open and relax. Best from 2014 through 2040.—*B.S.*

H. DÖNNHOFF

Riesling Spätlese Nahe Niederhäuser
Hermannshöhle 2007
94 points | \$82 | NA cases made | White

Bright and expressive, evoking apricot, nectarine and orange, with accents of sweet corn and vanilla custard. If the flavors were colors they would be neon, like a Pucci print. Drink now through 2028.—*B.S.*

SCHÄFER-FRÖHLICH

Riesling Spätlese Nahe Bockenauer Felseneck 2007
94 points | \$40 | 250 cases imported | White

This bursts from the glass with apricot, floral, tangerine and slate aromas and flavors. Though lightweight, it's saturated and full of energy, with a brisk, mouthwatering finish. Drink now through 2025.—*B.S.*

H. DÖNNHOFF

Riesling Auslese Gold Cap Nahe Niederhäuser
Hermannshöhle 2007
93 points | \$74/375ml | NA cases made | White

Fine clarity and delicacy mark this complex auslese. Floral, citrus and peach notes abound, but also honey and a strong mineral element. It's vibrant and long, leaving a mouthwatering impression. Should develop beautifully. Best from 2012 through 2035.—*B.S.*

H. DÖNNHOFF

Riesling Spätlese Nahe Schlossböckelheimer
Kupfergrube 2007
93 points | \$67 | NA cases made | White

Open and appealing for its peach and slate aromas and flavors, yet has a firm structure and plenty in reserve. It turns tangy on the lingering finish. Drink now through 2027.—*B.S.*

HELMUT HEXAMER

Riesling Eiswein Nahe Meddersheimer
Rheingrafenberg 2007
93 points | \$105/375ml | NA cases made | Dessert

A juicy style, with lime, mineral and floral flavors getting a boost from the tart acidity. It's also concentrated and, if not as sweet as some in this category, better balanced. Best from 2011 through 2030.—*B.S.*

HELMUT HEXAMER

Riesling Spätlese Nahe Schlossböckelheimer In Den
Felsen 2007
93 points | \$38 | NA cases made | White

A bright, playful Riesling, full of peach and passion fruit notes along with a salty undercurrent of mineral. Though light, it's packed with flavors and personality. Drink now through 2025.—*B.S.*

HELMUT HEXAMER

Riesling Spätlese*** Nahe Meddersheimer
Rheingrafenberg 2007
93 points | \$49 | NA cases made | White

Floral, peach and tangerine flavors are vivid and long, thanks to the vibrant structure. A little more racy and concentrated than the two-star and greater potential in the long run. Best from 2010 through 2027.—*B.S.*

SCHLOSS VOLLRADS

Riesling Auslese Rheingau 2007
93 points | \$44/375ml | 500 cases made | White

Confected flavors of citrus and red berry gain depth from a mineral streak and this is tightly wound like an electrical current. It remains focused through the finish, which is zippy and tart now. Best from 2012 through 2037.—*B.S.*

H. DÖNNHOFF

Riesling Spätlese Nahe Kreuznacher Krötenpfuhl 2007
92 points | \$54 | NA cases made | White

Quince and pear flavors predominate, with a hint of cinnamon. Bright acidity melds with the juicy texture as this coasts to a tasty finish. Very long. Drink now through 2022.—*B.S.*

H. DÖNNHOFF

Riesling Spätlese Nahe Norheimer Kirschheck 2007
92 points | \$52 | NA cases made | White

Concentrated and built around a core of acidity, this vanilla-tinged Riesling is refined and integrated. Yet, it seems to be withholding all its charms. The potential is in the long, grapefruit, peach and mineral finish. Best from 2011 through 2028.—*B.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.

ALBAN

Syrah Edna Valley Seymour's Vineyard 2004
98 points | \$145 | 250 cases made | Red

Shows amazing depth, richness and concentration. Dark and savory, with tiers of blackberry, blueberry and wild berry fruit that takes on a smoky, meaty, gamy edge. Full-blown, mouthcoating and deliciously complex. The finish goes on and on. Drink now through 2018. *From California.—J.L.*

THIERRY ALLEMAND

Cornas Reynard 2005
96 points | \$100 | NA cases made | Red

Densely packed, with tar, olive and maduro tobacco notes up front holding the massive core of braised fig, plum sauce and tar at bay for now. Muscular finish shows flashes of iron, *garrigue* and graphite. Very, very long. Best from 2011 through 2024. *From France.—J.M.*

GEORG BREUER

Riesling Auslese Gold Cap Rheingau Berg Roseneck 2007
96 points | \$95/375ml | 12 cases made | White

No shortage of botrytis here. Dried fig, honey, citrus and baking spice notes are supported by a racy structure. It's concentrated and very tight now, so give it time to unwind. Best from 2012 through 2040. *From Germany.—B.S.*

SAXUM

Broken Stones Paso Robles 2006
96 points | \$45 | 800 cases made | Red

Offers waves of ripe, exotic dark berry fruit, with wild berry, raspberry and blackberry jam notes that are full-bodied, rich and intense, pure and focused, ending with a long, complex, persistent finish. Syrah, Grenache and Mourvèdre. Drink now through 2015. *From California.—J.L.*

JC CELLARS

Syrah Rockpile Haley Rockpile Vineyard 2006
95 points | \$60 | 351 cases made | Red

Intense and vibrant, with rich, full-bodied blackberry, wild berry and blueberry fruit that's deep and concentrated, focused and pure, ending with a long, persistent finish that gushes with fruit and is supported by ripe tannins. Drink now through 2015. *From California.—J.L.*

SCHÄFER-FRÖHLICH

Riesling Auslese Nahe Bockenauer Felseneck 2007
95 points | \$67/375ml | 100 cases made | White

Passion fruit, pineapple and apricot aromas and flavors vie for attention in this racy, lithe white. There's a little botrytis influence and it revolves around a core of electric acidity. Great concentration on the long aftertaste. Best from 2012 through 2038. *From Germany.—B.S.*

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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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