

87 Carver Sutro 2006 Palisades Vineyard Petite Sirah (Napa Valley); \$40. Tastes heavy and tannic now, but there's a big core of blackberries, currants, grilled meat and peppery spices, and it's totally dry. Already throwing sediment, it could age in interesting ways over the next 6–8 years. —S.H.

87 Vina Robles 2008 Fore Petite Sirah (Paso Robles); \$49. Sweetly extracted and complex in blackberry, cherry, blueberry, currant, licorice, cocoa, bacon and spice flavors, this smooth Petite Sirah is ready to drink now. It's very rich, in the way of Paso Robles reds, and soft, with 15.6% alcohol by volume. —S.H.

84 David Fulton 2006 Our Sweet Petite Sirah (Napa Valley); \$40. Very sweet in sugary blackberry, chocolate and caramel flavors, with a flourish of acidity. But it's burning hot, with 21% alcohol by volume. —S.H.

CHARBONO

93 Shypoke 2007 Reserve Charbono (Calistoga); \$40. Shows the rugged tannins and acidity of this old variety, with a full-bodied mouthfeel. Really delivers on the fruit, with dark flavors of mulberries, plums, blackberries and blueberries, as well as an earthy richness. Bone dry and completely balanced, it will develop for more than ten years. *Cellar Selection.* —S.H.

87 OnTheEdge 2007 Frediani Vineyard Charbono (Napa Valley); \$40. An engaging wine from an old variety, hardly grown anymore in California. It's soft and dense in tannins, with spicy flavors of cherries and a bitter, earthy taste that brings to mind carob. Try as an interesting alternative to Zinfandel. —S.H.

85 OnTheEdge 2008 Frediani Vineyard Charbono (Napa Valley); \$40. Not quite ripe, with some veggie notes, but otherwise, this is a nice, polished wine, dry, full-bodied and spicy, with smooth tannins and some good cherry and blackberry fruit. —S.H.

85 Tofaneli Family 2007 Charbono (Napa Valley); \$33. Gritty in tannins and rustic in the mouth, this Charbono also is deficient in acidity. With those reservations, it's dry and rich in cherry, cocoa and tobacco flavors. —S.H.

84 Artezin 2007 Charbono (Napa Valley); \$30. Some unripe notes of vegetables mar this otherwise likeable wine. It's very dry and soft, with firm tannins and cherry, cocoa and cedar flavors. —S.H.

SANGIOVESE

89 Sorelle Winery 2009 Troppo Bella Sangiovese (Lodi); \$23. A savory, meaty and brooding Sangiovese that's rustic and simultaneously pretty, with an air of soft perfume on the nose. This small-production wine, with tiny bits of Barbera and Primitivo mixed in, would be really good with risotto. —V.B.

86 Pride Mountain 2008 Sangiovese (Sonoma County); \$55/500ml. Nothing at all like Chianti. More like a dessert wine, sweet and soft, with cherry, chocolate and spice flavors. The tannins are pretty, but the wine ultimately is simple. —S.H.

86 Santa Barbara Winery 2007 Stolpman Vineyard Sangiovese (Santa Ynez Valley); \$24. Tastes like a good, ripe Zinfandel, with red cherry, raspberry and licorice flavors as well as lots of pepper, cinnamon, anise and cloves. High alcohol gives it a hot feel. Drink now. —S.H.

85 Swanson 2006 Salon Wine Selection Sangiovese (Oakville); \$75. Shows the difficulties of growing Sangiovese, even in posh Oakville. The wine is acidic and one-dimensional, with cherry jam, cola and oak flavors. —S.H.

ZINFANDEL/PRIMITIVO

92 Joseph Swan Vineyards 2006 Zeigler Vineyard Zinfandel (Russian River Valley); \$28. Strikes a nice balance between fat, rich, decadently ripe raspberry and date fruit, with a drink-me-now appeal, and a more serious undertow of tannins, mushrooms and pine. Give it a good decant, and focus on what's going on in the glass. —S.H.

91 Puccioni 2007 Old Vine Zinfandel (Dry Creek Valley); \$28. The definitive Dry Creek Zinfandel. It has tons of spices, wild berries and cherries and sweetly smoked sandalwood. Handles its high alcohol well, with the heat accenting the peppers. A lusty, complex Zin to drink now. *Editors' Choice.* —S.H.

90 Beaver Creek 2008 Old Vine Zinfandel (Russian River Valley); \$29. A big, lusty Zin, with a blast of briary raspberry, cherry, cocoa, beef jerky, anise, pepper and sandalwood flavors. No mere fruit bomb, it's framed with a fine acid-tannin structure, and finishes dry. Best now and over the next six years, before the fruit starts fading. —S.H.

90 Joseph Swan Vineyards 2006 Mancini Ranch Zinfandel (Russian River Valley); \$26. At nearly five years of age, this wine tastes like it was just bottled. It's still juicy and fresh in raspberries, cherries and spices, with a sweet, clean finish. A pretty, polished and complex wine to drink now and over the next 6–8 years. —S.H.

90 Keating 2009 Montecillo Vineyard Zinfandel (Sonoma Valley); \$28. For full review see page 7.

90 Ottimino Vineyards 2007 Biglieri Vineyard Zinfandel (Dry Creek Valley); \$28. A classic Dry Creek Zinfandel, dry, medium-bodied and spicy, with wild berry fruit and that inimitable briary note to the mouthfeel. Really pleasant, with rich, ripe berry, licorice and cedar flavors. Ideal with barbecue. —S.H.

89 Kenwood 2008 Zinfandel (Sonoma County); \$14. For full review see page 9. *Best Buy.*

88 Ottimino Vineyards 2007 Windsor Oaks Vineyard Zinfandel (Russian River Valley); \$28. Lots of fresh, ripe fruit and spices in this dry, lusty Zinfandel. Flatters with wild raspberry, cherry, mulberry, pepper and baking spice flavors, wrapped into firm tannins. Great for BBQ. Drink now. —S.H.

87 Hendry 2008 Block 24 Primitivo (Napa Valley); \$35. Tastes like Zinfandel, a tannic, dry, spicy wine with blackberry, cherry, currant tobacco and leather flavors. Lots of richness here, and it wears its high alcohol well. Enjoy with barbecue. —S.H.

87 Joseph Swan Vineyards 2006 Stellwagen Vineyard Zinfandel (Sonoma Valley); \$26. The sweetness got out of hand in this wine, which tastes like it has excessive residual sugar. There's a raspberry and white chocolate power bar flavor. That's delicious, of course, but consumers should know the wine isn't dry. —S.H.

87 Pedroncelli 2009 Mother Clone Zinfandel (Dry Creek Valley); \$15. A smooth, rich, creamy Zin, luscious in blackberry jam, chocolate and spice flavors. It's on the soft side, which accentuates the alcohol, but it sure is delicious. Drink now with BBQ. —S.H.

87 Williams Selyem 2009 Bacigalupi Vineyard Zinfandel (Russian River Valley); \$50. Good, rich and spicy Zin from Williams Selyem winemaker Bob Cabral. It's not the most memorable Bacigalupi ever, with a somewhat soft, simple structure. But the raspberry, vanilla, toast and spice flavors are fine for drinking now. —S.H.

86 Kunde 2008 Reserve Century Vines Zinfandel (Sonoma Valley); \$30. Fruity and spicy, offering a blast of briary forest berry and spice flavors and a tannic, brambly mouthfeel. It's nicely dry, yet can't quite overcome a certain rusticity. —S.H.

86 Oakville Winery 2009 Estate Zinfandel (Oakville); \$25. This is a candied, jammy Zinfandel. It has that bubblegummy gassiness you sometimes get in Beaujolais, with rich, ripe flavors of raspberries. Give it until late 2011 or early 2012 to calm down. —S.H.

86 Ottimino Vineyards 2007 Ottimino Vineyard Little 8 Primitivo (Russian River Valley); \$32. Primitivo seldom has the elegance of true Zinfandel, and so it is here. Despite a resemblance to wild berry and spice flavors, the mouthfeel is rustic, and the finish is sweet. —S.H.

86 Saddleback 2007 Old Vines Zinfandel (Napa Valley); \$36. Lots of delicious raspberry and cherry flavors in this softly tannic wine. However, it's very high in alcohol, almost Porty, and quite sweet. Drink it now with grilled or roasted meats and poultry. —S.H.

86 XYZin 2008 Vine Age Series 10 Year Old Vines Zinfandel (California); \$16. A friendly, robust Zinfandel, rich in peppery spices, with raspberry and cherry flavors that have a touch of briary nettles