

Wine Spectator Insider

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Mavis R. Shankes, Editor and Publisher

FIRST LOOK AT OUR EDITORS' MOST EXCITING NEW WINES

We kick off *Wine Spectator Insider's* first issue of 2006 by wishing everyone a happy New Year and, of course, by making a few resolutions: to find and review more of the world's best and rarest fine wines; to search out noteworthy bottles that offer tremendous value; and, as always, to bring them to *Insider* subscribers twice a month, helping readers learn about these limited-production wines before they sell out.

This edition features 30 outstanding wines. James Laube reviews 13 from California, six of them among the stellar Syrah bottlings to be featured in his upcoming California Rhônes report. Bruce Sanderson showcases nine German Rieslings, all from the promising 2004 vintage, and all rated 93 points or more. And from France's Loire Valley, James Molesworth offers eight wines; almost all are well-priced whites, including a surprising Chenin Blanc from an oft-overlooked appellation. You'll find it among the Hot Wines, on page 4.

California

Foxen

Syrah Santa Maria Valley Tinquak Vineyard 2003
92 points | \$35 | 175 cases made

Delivers a tight, rich, vibrant beam of pepper, wild berry, sage, cumin and exotic spices in a sharply focused style. The texture turns smooth and polished, ending with a long, complex aftertaste. Drink now through 2009.—J.L.

Foxen

Syrah Santa Ynez Valley Williamson-Dow Vineyard 2003
92 points | \$30 | 500 cases made

Ultra-rich, almost syrupy, with dense, plush, smoky currant, blackberry, wild berry and exotic spices and game meat scents. Tightly focused, with a long, deep, rich finish and ripe, supple tannins, ending with a dash of cola. Drink now through 2009.—J.L.

Ladera

Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley Lone Canyon Vineyard 2002
92 points | \$65 | 1,900 cases made

Rich and intense, with a tight, concentrated core of earthy currant, mineral, wild berry, sage and cedar. The tannins give it a solid backbone. Best from 2007 through 2013.—J.L.

Etude

Cabernet Sauvignon St. Helena 2002
91 points | \$100 | 381 cases made

Supple and elegant, with ripe, plush currant, blackberry, spice and cedar notes joined by a subtle touch of espresso bean, ending with a hint of mocha and polished tannins. Drink now through 2011.—J.L.

Hill Climber

Syrah Napa Valley Roly Akers 2002
91 points | \$58 | 200 cases made

Tight in the aroma but more expansive on the palate, where it reveals a dense, concentrated range of earthy currant, leather, sage, beef carpaccio and mineral. Tannic, but the fruit flavors push through on the finish. Drink now through 2012.—J.L.