

Wine Spectator Insider

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THIS week's *Wine Spectator Insider* sticks to California and Italy, covering reds from both countries. James Laube focuses on Cabernet Sauvignon, Pinot Noir and Syrah from Napa Valley and Sonoma, including a classic-rated Patz & Hall Pinot Noir bottling. Produced from grapes grown in the Free-stone Hill Vineyard of the Russian River Valley, the 2007 vintage of this Pinot Noir offers concentrated and complex flavors that will allow it to be opened now or held for years.

James Suckling highlights 27 bottlings of Amarone della Valpolicella, a rich red wine made from Italy's native Corvina, Rondinella and Molinara grapes. Winemakers partially dry the grapes before fermentation to get a very ripe, big-bodied wine that has a gemstone hue, deep flavors and firm tannins. Suckling notes flavors like tar, crushed raspberry and chocolate in bottlings such as the classic-rated Romano Dal Forno Amarone della Valpolicella 2004. Both the Romano Dal Forno and Patz & Hall can be found among the Hot Wines, on page 4.

California

CHALK HILL

Syrah Chalk Hill 2007

94 points | \$60 | 304 cases made | Red

Fairly massive at this stage, deep, dense, rich and concentrated, with layers of intense wild berry, blackberry, pepper, sage, mineral and spice, gaining depth and persistence on the finish, where the flavors are deep and lingering. Best from 2011 through 2017.—J.L.

VALDEZ FAMILY

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Lancel Creek Vineyard 2007

93 points | \$55 | 130 cases made | Red

Tightly wound, with firm, pure, vivid blackberry, wild berry and olallieberry flavors that offer excellent structure. Full-bodied, ending with crisp acidity, excellent depth and a long, berry- and mineral-laced finish. Drink now through 2015.—J.L.

CARTER

Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley Beckstoffer To Kalon Vineyard 2007

92 points | \$125 | 190 cases made | Red

Extremely tight and backward, dry, herbal and savory, with complex, concentrated sage, dill and dried currant flavors. Full-bodied and intense, ending with black licorice-laced, mouthcoating tannins. A youngster in need of cellaring. Best from 2012 through 2019.—J.L.

CARTER

Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley Coliseum Block 2007

92 points | \$125 | 277 cases made | Red

Earthy, with dried herb and currant, sage and cedar notes, full-bodied, savory and complex, firm and structured, ending with a wall of tannins, but impressive for its density and concentration. Drink now through 2018.—J.L.

DUMOL

Syrah Russian River Valley eddie's patch 2007

92 points | \$76 | 420 cases made | Red

Dense and massive, rich and concentrated, this full-blown red has a mouthcoating core of spicy dried berry, currant, spice, pepper, beef carpaccio and tannins that grip and hold on. Needs plenty of air. Best from 2011 through 2017.—J.L.

EHLERS ESTATE

Cabernet Sauvignon St. Helena 1886 2007

92 points | \$95 | 800 cases made | Red

Smooth, rich and generous, full-bodied and intense without being heavy or ponderous, offering a mix of ripe plum, kirsch and wild berry. Holds its focus, ending with a long, layered finish. Drink now through 2017.—J.L.

FONTANELLA FAMILY

Cabernet Sauvignon Mount Veeder 2007
92 points | \$50 | 650 cases made | Red

Pure, ripe, intense and concentrated, this is structured with firm, minerally tannins, gaining depth and offering peppery currant, ripe plum and wild berry notes. Ends with firm tannins and a graphite edge. Best from 2010 through 2017.—J.L.

JANZEN

Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley Beckstoffer To Kalon Vineyard 2007
92 points | \$135 | 235 cases made | Red

Dense and chewy, with firm tannins wrapped around a rich core of blackberry, black licorice, currant and savory herb scents, ending with a minerally edge and a touch of melted black licorice. Drink now through 2017.—J.L.

MORLET

Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley Coeur de Vallée 2007
92 points | \$175 | 250 cases made | Red

Ripe and fleshy, with supple plum, blackberry and wild berry fruit that's pure, full-bodied, complex and layered, elegant and well-balanced, ending with an enticing berry-laced aftertaste. Drink now through 2017.—J.L.

Italy

GIUSEPPE QUINTARELLI

Amarone della Valpolicella Classico 2000
94 points | \$340 | 750 cases made | Red

Offers beautiful aromas of ripe plum and berries, with citrus peel and floral notes. Full-bodied, with silky tannins and plenty of fruit that turns to black licorice and cherry. Subtle yet flavorful. Really complex. Drink now.—J.S.

MICHELE CASTELLANI

Amarone della Valpolicella Classico Colle Cristi 2006
93 points | \$50 | 800 cases imported | Red

Offers dried berries, spices and cigar box notes, with lots of dried fruits. Full-bodied, with round, caressing tannins and lots of ripe fruit and toasty oak, yet balanced and juicy. Why wait? But patience will pay off. Best from 2011 through 2018.—J.S.

VENTURINI MASSIMINO

Amarone della Valpolicella Classico Campo Masua 2004
93 points | \$68 | 100 cases imported | Red

Offers plum and ripe berry notes, with hints of dried flowers and sandalwood. Full-bodied, with a solid core of fruit and supersilky tannins. Complex and beautiful. Goes on and on. Wonderful to drink now. Drink now.—J.S.

ALLEGRINI

Amarone della Valpolicella Classico 2005
92 points | \$75 | NA cases made | Red

This full, thick Amarone offers masses of ripe fruit and fresh herbs, with velvety tannins. Turns to black pepper and fruit on the finish. Should age beautifully, but why wait? Drink now.—J.S.

MICHELE CASTELLANI

Amarone della Valpolicella Classico Cinque Stelle 2006
92 points | \$80 | 1,000 cases imported | Red

This has a powerful nose, with intense aromas of dried fruits, forest fruits and dark chocolate. Full-bodied, with a lovely soft, round palate, pretty fruits and toasty oak. Delicious. Hard not to drink now. Best from 2011 through 2018.—J.S.

PASQUA

Amarone della Valpolicella Riserva 2003
92 points | \$190 | NA cases made | Red

Starts off a little earthy and decadent, but then evolves into beautiful ripe fruit on the nose. Full-bodied, with superpolished tannins and a long, rich finish. Dense and well-made. Very beautiful. Impressive for this producer. Drink now.—J.S.

LORENZO BEGALI

Amarone della Valpolicella Classico Monte Ca' Bianca 2005
91 points | \$85 | 250 cases imported | Red

Wonderful aromas of plum and delicate vanilla bean lead to a medium body, with polished, fine tannins and a delicious finish. Chewy and tight. Needs to open. Give this some bottle age. Best after 2011.—J.S.

BOLLA

Amarone della Valpolicella Classico Le Origini 2006
91 points | \$70 | 100 cases imported | Red

Plum and dried fruits on the nose, with spice and clove notes. Full-bodied, with round, silky tannins and plenty of focused fruit. Turns to milk chocolate on the finish. There's lots going on here in a subtle and pleasing way. Best from 2011 through 2017.—J.S.

MASI

Amarone della Valpolicella Classico Costasera 2006
91 points | \$60 | 6,500 cases imported | Red

Pretty blueberry and cherry aromas on the nose, with lovely intensity. Full-bodied, round and juicy, with loads of fruit and a soft, caressing palate. Long finish. So good now. Drink now through 2018.—J.S.

MONTRESOR

Amarone della Valpolicella Fondatore 2006
91 points | \$51 | NA cases made | Red

Complex aromas of fresh porcini and dark fruits follow through to a full body, with superpolished, velvety tannins and a long finish. There's lovely refinement and richness to this wine. Best from 2011 through 2015.—J.S.

NOVAIA

Amarone della Valpolicella Classico Corte Vaona 2006
91 points | \$50 | 180 cases imported | Red

Pure plum and berry fruit on this, with stemmy hints. Full-bodied, with plenty of subtle, jammy fruit and firm tannins underneath. Needs time to come together, but I like the fruit and tannin backbone to this wine. Comes from a 7-hectare selection of the vineyard. Best after 2011.—J.S.

NOVAIA

Amarone della Valpolicella Classico Corte Vaona 2005
91 points | \$50 | 200 cases imported | Red

The nose on this Amarone is wonderfully fruity, with ripe plum and berries. Full-bodied, with velvety tannins and lovely sweet fruit that turns to delicious Christmas cake. So long and gorgeous. Why wait? Drink now.—J.S.

LE SALETTE

Amarone della Valpolicella Classico Pergole Vece 2005
91 points | \$137 | 150 cases imported | Red

Big and juicy on the nose, with loads of ripe fruit, yet in a subtle way. Full-bodied, with round, soft tannins that turn silky and very pretty. Tight, but there's lots coming your way with bottle age. Best after 2011.—J.S.

TENUTA SANT'ANTONIO

Amarone della Valpolicella Campo dei Gigli 2005
91 points | \$75 | 150 cases imported | Red

There's lovely dark chocolate, black licorice and ripe dark fruits in this full-bodied Amarone, with layers of polished tannins and a refined, fruity, mineral finish. Firm and stylish. Best after 2011.—J.S.

SANTI

Amarone della Valpolicella Proemio 2005
91 points | \$72 | NA cases made | Red

Offers sweet raspberry and light toasty oak on the nose. Full-bodied, with a lovely balance of fine tannins and a long, caressing finish. Reserved yet beautiful. Best from 2011 through 2016.—J.S.

SARTORI

Amarone della Valpolicella Corte Brà 2004
91 points | \$52 | 335 cases imported | Red

Attractive aromas of citrus fruit and ripe plum lead to a full body, with lovely silky tannins and a long, caressing finish. I love the texture to this. Drink now or age. So good. Best from 2011 through 2018.—J.S.

FRATELLI SPERI

Amarone della Valpolicella Classico Vigneto Monte Sant'Urbano 2006
91 points | \$40 | 1,000 cases imported | Red

There's a lovely nose on this wine, offering blueberry, mineral and floral notes that follow through to a full body, with subtle fruit and a firm, polished tannin structure. The polish and beauty to this is right. Best after 2011.—J.S.

TOMMASI

Amarone della Valpolicella Classico Ca' Florian 2005
91 points | \$70 | 170 cases imported | Red

Violet and blueberry on the nose, with slightly toasty oak and barley. Full-bodied, with silky tannins and a long, sweet, fruity finish. Balanced. No reason to wait on this. Drink now through 2018.—J.S.

STEFANO ACCORDINI

Amarone della Valpolicella 2006
90 points | \$40 | 550 cases imported | Red

Wonderful aromas of ripe berries and flowers such as violets follow through to a full body, with chewy yet polished tannins and a long finish. Shows lovely balance and richness. Best after 2011.—J.S.

ALLEGRINI

Amarone della Valpolicella Classico 2006
90 points | \$75 | NA cases made | Red

Interesting aromas of dark chocolate, coffee bean and very ripe fruit follow through to a full body, with firm tannins and a finish of sweet fruit and treacle tart. A tight style. Needs time to soften and open. Best after 2012.—J.S.

LUIGI RIGHETTI

Amarone della Valpolicella Classico Capitel De' Roari 2006
90 points | \$31 | 8,000 cases imported | Red

Sweet berry and jam on the nose. Full-bodied, with ultrafine tannins and very pretty ripe fruit. Offers fine tannins and a long finish. So delicious now. Why wait? Readily available and well-priced. Drink now through 2013.—J.S.

ROCCOLO GRASSI

Amarone della Valpolicella 2006
90 points | \$90 | 125 cases imported | Red

Beautiful aromas of crushed blackberry, forest fruits and fresh mushroom. Full-bodied, with a lovely balance of fruit and toasty oak. Balanced and delicious. An elegant and fruity Amarone for current drinking. Drink now.—J.S.

FRATELLI SPERI

Amarone della Valpolicella Classico Vigneto Monte Sant'Urbano 2005
90 points | \$40 | NA cases made | Red

Shows lots of blackberry jam and fresh herbs on the nose. Full-bodied, round and fruity, with velvety tannins and a long finish. The balance and richness you look for in an Amarone. Best after 2011.—J.S.

ZENATO

Amarone della Valpolicella Classico 2005
90 points | \$70 | 1,000 cases imported | Red

Pretty aromas of boysenberry and sliced plum follow through to a full body, with unctuous ripe fruit. Round, ready. Drink now.—J.S.

ZENATO

Amarone della Valpolicella Classico Riserva 2004
90 points | \$130 | 300 cases imported | Red

Offers dried berries, with hints of treacle tart and slate. Full-bodied, with firm tannins and racy acidity. Dense, yet slightly reserved. Still needs time to open. Best after 2010.—J.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.

ROMANO DAL FORNO

Amarone della Valpolicella 2004

96 points | \$169 | NA cases made | Red

Offers an amazing brilliant color of dark ruby red that's almost black. The nose shows subtle tar, black chocolate and crushed raspberry, and this is full and opulent on the palate, with fabulously polished tannins and a long, long finish. Drink now through 2020. *From Italy.—J.S.*

PATZ & HALL

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Freestone Hill 2007

95 points | \$70 | 245 cases made | Red

A stunning effort, pure, rich, complex and vivid, with delicious blackberry, wild berry, blueberry and olallieberry flavors that are deeply concentrated, gaining depth and complexity and soaring on the finish. Drink now through 2015. *From California.—J.L.*

ROUND POND ESTATE

Cabernet Sauvignon Rutherford 2007

94 points | \$50 | 4,018 cases made | Red

A tremendous effort, dense and chewy, robust and concentrated, with a rich, focused core of blackberry, currant, cedar, herb and mineral. Full-bodied, gaining depth and persistence. Drink now through 2018. *From California.—J.L.*

ZENATO

Amarone della Valpolicella Classico 2006

94 points | \$70 | 1,000 cases imported | Red

Wonderful aromas of black licorice and blueberry follow through to a full body, with juicy, round tannins. Luscious and decadent. Might be better on toast! A gorgeous wine, this is the real deal for Amarone. Why wait? But a little bottle age should really bring it together. Best after 2011. *From Italy.—J.S.*

WINE SPECTATOR'S TASTERS

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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