

# The Cork Report

## Wine of the Month

### Genesis Merlot 2002

This is exceptional. The best Merlot we've tasted this year. Rich, complex, well-rounded tannins and a touch of mint. At about \$15 a bottle, an excellent value. **94**



### Vina Vilano Rosado 2005

With an introduction of a new wine like this from Spain, it's no wonder the popularity of rosé (*rosado*) continues to grow. Slightly dry, packed full of strawberry flavors and easy to sip, this is a perfect summer quaffer. **88**



### Kumeu River Village Chardonnay 2005

Sauvignon Blanc may be king of the whites in New Zealand, but this wine proves there's a place for Chardonnay in New Zealand as well. Complex, slightly acidic flavors make this fresh and filling. **89**



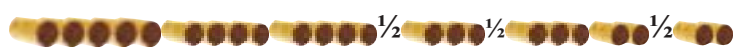
### Crane Lake Pinot Grigio 2005

A veritable inexpensive value at about \$5 or less, this is a simple, easy-drinking summer wine. Enough said. **86**



### Guide to the Cork Report

90-100	<i>Outstanding</i>
80-89	<i>Very Good</i>
70-79	<i>Good</i>
Below 70	<i>Really bad and probably won't even be mentioned</i>



# John Breitlow's Picks



## Sterling Napa Valley "SVR" Reserve 2002

Exquisite, masterfully-crafted Bordeaux-styled super-premium red wine styling from a long-time premier Napa valley winery. Complex, layered, fragrant, ripe, elegant, impressive and tasty now but definitely ageworthy. **95**

*Note: Here are my tasting notes on "the rest of the best:" leading premium wines I selected for the 7<sup>th</sup> Annual "Winona Snowbird Wine Tasting" conducted last March in Palm Desert, California.*

**Frei Bros. 2003 Russian River 'Reserve' Pinot Noir** – remarkably clean and pure, medium-bodied, superbly crafted all-purpose premium red with perfectly balanced black cherry and raspberry fruit and vanilla accents: a genuine Gallo gem. **95**

**Geysler Peak 2002 Alexander Valley Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve** – impressive, well-balanced super-premium red dinner wine with deep dense color, intense, remarkably full yet mellow flavors and fragrances of cassis, vanilla, and ripe blackberries – authentic reserve character. **94**

**Ch. Ste Michelle 2004 Cold Creek Vyd. Columbia Valley Chardonnay** – ripe and mellow, well-balanced most user-friendly Chardonnay aperitif and dinner wine with tasty ripe apple fruit, hints of roasted nuts, rich texture, most tasty and enjoyable, good value. **93**

**Beaulieu 2002 Carneros Pinot Noir Reserve** – an unusually substantial super-premium Pinot Noir with deep, dense color, lots of spicy berry fruit, supple tannins, complex spicy finish, benefits from breathing, tasty now but seems ageworthy: a fine meat or cheese companion. **93**

**Beckmen 2003 Santa Ynez Estate Syrah** – a carefully-crafted, complex red dinner wine with inviting fragrances, smooth texture, rich and mellow, nicely spiced red berry fruit, good balance, impressive Rhone Valley styling, long lively finish. **93**

**Ch. St. Jean 2002 Robert Young Vyd. Chardonnay** – an impressive premium classic with fragrant floral aromas, delicate peach and citrus fruit, subtle smoky bouquet, brisk acidity and a lemony finish: admirable before or during dinner. **92**

**Dry Creek 2003 Sonoma 'Old Vine' Zinfandel** – elegant, tasty and well-balanced all-purpose premium red wine with lively, lingering berry and cherry fruit, hints of spice, lingering harmonic finish. **92**

**Korbel Russian River 'Natural'** – one of California's most elegant good-value preprandial and dinner wines, a well-crafted 75/25 Pinot Noir/Chardonnay blend, just off-dry, ideal as an aperitif, or with fish, shellfish, or fruit. **92**

**Talbott 2004 Kali Hart Vyd. Monterey Chardonnay** – crisp clean, young and refreshing premium white aperitif and dinner wine with pronounced tropical fruit fragrance, upfront citrus, pineapple and melon fruit, impressive balance, lingering finish, ageworthy. **91**

**Beaulieu 2001 Napa "Tapestry" Reserve Red Blend** – super-premium Bordeaux-styled red blend, dark dense ruby color, ripe black cherry fruit, hint of olives and cocoa, firm texture, benefit from breathing or decanting, ageworthy, impressive. **91**

**Ch. St. Jean 2004 Sonoma J. Riesling** – impressive and distinctive, unusually intense and flavorful premium off-dry white aperitif and dinner wine, lavish fragrant fruit, superb balance, long finish. **91**

**Barton & Guestier 2003 Chateauneuf-du-Pape** – fragrant inviting upfront aromas, jammy peppery raspberry and cherry fruit, traces of cinnamon and mild chocolate, good balance, authentic regional character, good premium value. **90**

**Monkey Bay 2005 Marlborough NZ Sauvignon Blanc** – Ample, lively but gentle and juicy citrus flavors and fragrances, grassy herbal grace notes: a charming and elegant cocktail or dinner wine of good value and great flavor. **90**

**Rancho Zabaco 2003 Sonoma 'Heritage Vines' Zinfandel** – pleasant, smooth, medium-bodied all-purpose good-value red wine with mellow tannins, hints of spice, ideal with Mediterranean foods. **90**

**Roederer Anderson Valley Estate-Bottled Brut** – a smooth, elegant and enjoyable premium quaff, mellower than most Brut, with subtle complex pear fruit, lightly spicy and nutty overtones, and a lush depth of flavor and texture, from California's most French bubbly vintner. **89**

**Jekel Vyds. 2004 Monterey Riesling** – smooth, mellow, medium-bodied and pleasantly flavorful cocktail and table wine with tasty varietal fruit, nice balance, good value. **89**

**Barton & Guestier 2004 Vouvray** – one of the wine world's most delightful and user-friendly bargains: pleasantly upfront fruity nose, lush tropical fruit, subtle complex hints of spice and minerals, elegant balance, excellent cocktail or dinner wine value. **89**

**MacMurray Ranch 2004 Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** – well-made, substantial premium red dinner wine with chewy black cherry and strawberry fruit, soft vanilla and spice bouquet, good with poultry, salmon, and roasted meat. **89**

**Jekel Vyds. 2004 Monterey Riesling** – smooth, mellow, medium-bodied and pleasantly flavorful cocktail and table wine with tasty varietal fruit, nice balance, good value. **89**

**Fetzer 2004 Valley Oaks Riesling** – inviting pleasant apricot and pear aromas, mellow and juicy ripe peach fruit, with delicate *Kabinett* styling, subtle succulence, and mellow balance: good value in a tasty longtime varietal leader. **88**

**Five Rivers 2004 Santa Barbara Pinot Noir** – pleasant lighter styling, lively berry fruit, mild tannins smoky floral and leather aromas, good value. **87**

