

Wine Spectator Insider

Marvin R. Shanken *Editor and Publisher*

A Members-Only, Weekly Publication

THIS week's *Wine Spectator Insider* highlights Zinfandel from California and Brunello di Montalcino from Italy. Tim Fish focuses on jammy and luscious Zinfandels from Napa Valley and Sonoma County, including new releases from Carlisle in Dry Creek Valley and Orin Swift's Prisoner Zinfandel-based blend, both of which receive outstanding ratings.

James Suckling reviews 20 riserva Brunellos di Montalcino from the classic-rated 2004 vintage. Scoring 97 points as a vintage, 2004 is noted for perfumed, majestic and refined Brunellos. Suckling offers notes on this week's four Hot Wines, which can be found on page 4 and include wines from Uccelliera and Valdicava. The classic-rated wines showcase both ripe and dark fruits, but also earthy notes like porcini mushroom, mineral and toasted oak.

California

VALDEZ

Zinfandel Dry Creek Valley Simoncini Vineyard 2007
95 points | \$38 | 200 cases made | Red

A blockbuster, boldly structured but impeccably balanced and complex, with smoky, meaty blackberry aromas. Ripe yet vivid flavors of huckleberry, fresh cracked pepper and toasty espresso-tinged oak. Drink now through 2016.—*T.F.*

CARLISLE

Zinfandel Russian River Valley Montafi Ranch 2008
93 points | \$45 | 236 cases made | Red

Seductive is the best word to describe this wine, which is so rich and voluptuous, yet has great depth and soul. Offers floral aromas of raspberry and blueberry, with supple flavors of boysenberry, brown spices and licorice. The finish lingers and slowly takes on ripe tannins. Drink now through 2015.—*T.F.*

MARTINELLI

Zinfandel Russian River Valley Vellutini Ranch 2007
93 points | \$50 | 375 cases made | Red

Rich, ripe and luscious, with bold aromas mocha, cherry and spice and layered flavors of blackberry pie, toast and licorice that lead to plush tannins. This is a bit shy on acidity, but so flavorful it's hard to begrudge. Drink now through 2015.—*T.F.*

CARLISLE

Zinfandel Dry Creek Valley 2008
92 points | \$34 | 292 cases made | Red

Elegant and sleekly structured, yet with a bright backbone of complexity and ripe tannins. Offers lively black raspberry and spicy vanilla aromas that lead to supple flavors of black cherry and licorice. Drink now through 2014.—*T.F.*

HARTFORD FAMILY

Zinfandel Russian River Valley Fanucchi-Wood Road Vineyard 2008
92 points | \$55 | 250 cases made | Red

Vibrant and zesty, yet complex and layered, with bright red plum and savory blueberry aromas. Offers supple flavors of licorice and saffras, backed up by a dense, spicy structure. Drink now through 2015.—*T.F.*

ORIN SWIFT

The Prisoner Napa Valley 2008
92 points | \$35 | 55,000 cases made | Red

Focused, rich and ripe, showing aromas of black cherry and smoky pepper, with sleek but complex flavors of boysenberry, licorice and toasty oak that linger toward balanced tannins. Zinfandel, Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah, Petite Sirah, Charbono and Grenache. Drink now through 2015.—*T.F.*

VALDEZ

Zinfandel Dry Creek Valley Quinn Vineyard 2007
92 points | \$38 | 331 cases made | Red

Rich and ripe, but incredibly deep and focused, with aromas of wild berry and licorice and supple flavors of blackberry and smoky espresso. The tannins turn muscular on the finish. Drink now through 2016.—*T.F.*

ARROWHEAD MOUNTAIN VINEYARD

Zinfandel Sonoma Valley 2007
91 points | \$40 | 833 cases made | Red

Big and voluptuous, and though this could use a firm backbone of acidity, it's appealing for its exotic, superripe wild berry, smoke and meat aromas and soft, ripe huckleberry pie and spicy licorice flavors. Drink now through 2014.—*T.F.*

CARLISLE

Zinfandel Dry Creek Valley Gold Mine Ranch 2008
91 points | \$36 | 185 cases made | Red

A classy, elegant version, with bright raspberry and spice aromas and supple but layered cherry pie, sage and licorice flavors. Tasted twice, with consistent notes. Drink now through 2014.—*T.F.*

HARTFORD FAMILY

Zinfandel Russian River Valley 2008
91 points | \$35 | 371 cases made | Red

Densely packed with fruit, but still sleek and focused, with aromas of boysenberry, spice and nutmeg and layered flavors of creamy plum, fresh anise and loamy mineral, finishing with firm but ripe tannins. Best from 2011 through 2015.—*T.F.*

OUTPOST

Zinfandel Howell Mountain 2007
91 points | \$45 | 1,200 cases made | Red

Dense and concentrated, with bold boysenberry, cracked white pepper and loamy mineral aromas. Complex yet tightly wound plum and anise flavors lead to ripe but muscular tannins. Needs time. Best from 2011 through 2016.—*T.F.*

AMAPOLA CREEK

Zinfandel Sonoma Valley Monte Rosso Vineyard Viñas Antiguas 2007
90 points | \$40 | 313 cases made | Red

Sleek and elegantly jammy, but well-structured. Offers bright aromas of tart plum and toasty spice, with layered flavors of black cherry, sage and anise that finish with a kiss of ripe tannins. Drink now through 2015.—*T.F.*

DE LOACH

Zinfandel Russian River Valley O.F.S. 2007
90 points | \$30 | 250 cases made | Red

Zesty and ripe, yet sleek and balanced, with toasty raspberry and spice aromas and layered plum, vanilla and fresh sage flavors that linger toward lively tannins. Drink now through 2015.—*T.F.*

HARTFORD FAMILY

Zinfandel Russian River Valley Jolene's Vineyard 2008
90 points | \$55 | 275 cases made | Red

Rich and dense, with aromas of plum and boysenberry that lead to complex flavors of blueberry, dried brown spices and fresh herbs. The tannins are big but ripe and well balanced. Best from 2011 through 2016.—*T.F.*

CAROL SHELTON

Zinfandel Russian River Valley Karma Zin Old Vine Rue Vineyard 2006
90 points | \$33 | 356 cases made | Red

Densely packed with rich, zesty fruit, including plum and blueberry, plus briary flavors of licorice, black pepper and mineral loam. The tannins are still firm. Needs time. Best after 2012.—*T.F.*

VALDEZ

Zinfandel Russian River Valley Landy Vineyard 2007
90 points | \$38 | 395 cases made | Red

Dense and jam-packed with fruit, showing huckleberry cobbler aromas and ripe, layered plum, blueberry, white pepper and mineral flavors that finish with balanced tannins. Best from 2011 through 2016.—*T.F.*

Italy Brunello di Montalcino

MOCALI

Brunello di Montalcino Vigna delle Raunate Riserva 2004
96 points | \$85 | 85 cases imported | Red

This is a wine full of new wood that gives you a green coffee bean and intensely ripe fruit aroma. It's very juicy and rich. The power is all there. Then the finish shows wonderfully ripe, yet sweet and subtle, dark fruits. Best wine ever from here. Best after 2011.—*J.S.*

CASTELLO ROMITORIO

Brunello di Montalcino Riserva 2004
96 points | \$119 | 250 cases imported | Red

This is a wine with a beautiful density of blueberry and blackberry fruit on the nose and palate. I am impressed with the fruit structure and ripe tannins. Long and intense, with loads of new wood, but seems to hold together beautifully. Best wine ever from here. Best after 2012.—*J.S.*

SAN FILIPPO

Brunello di Montalcino Le Lucère Riserva 2004
96 points | \$125 | 210 cases imported | Red

Such beautiful and subtle ripe strawberry and floral aromas here. Full body, with sweet, ripe tannins and fruit. Long and gorgeous. So much here. Layered and persistent. Best after 2012.—*J.S.*

PODERE LA VIGNA

Brunello di Montalcino Riserva 2004

96 points | \$69 | 100 cases imported | Red

Loads of milk chocolate, with ripe plums and blueberries. Full body, with chewy tannins and a powerful rich finish. This is so rich and opulent. So much going on. Superb. This cantina keeps getting better and better. Best after 2012.—*J.S.*

PODERE BRIZIO-ROBERTO BELLINI

Brunello di Montalcino Riserva 2004

95 points | \$120 | 165 cases imported | Red

This is really perfumed and very beautiful, with roses and dark fruits. Full body, with loads of fruit in reserve and super polished tannins. Its finish goes on a long time, turning chewy at the end. Very powerful. It really builds on the palate. Best wine ever from here. Best after 2011.—*J.S.*

CITILLE DI SOPRA

Brunello di Montalcino Riserva 2004

95 points | \$64 | 50 cases imported | Red

Intense aromas of ripe strawberries, raspberries and flowers. Full body, with intensely silky tannins and lively acidity. It goes on for minutes. Still holding back, but classic. Best after 2012.—*J.S.*

CORTE PAVONE

Brunello di Montalcino Riserva 2004

95 points | \$88 | 210 cases imported | Red

Dark colored, with an amazing depth of ripe berries, cherries and red licorice on the nose. Full body, with very soft and polished tannins on the palate and a long fruity finish. This is a friendly and cuddly riserva. Why wait on it? Drink now through 2020.—*J.S.*

FERRERO

Brunello di Montalcino Riserva 2004

95 points | \$90 | 25 cases imported | Red

Very complex aromas of tar, asphalt, dried dark berries, and ripe cherries. Full body, with big chewy tannins and a long, long finish. This is very concentrated and powerful. Another blockbuster. Best wine ever from here. Best after 2013.—*J.S.*

MARCHESI DE' FRESCOBALDI

Brunello di Montalcino Castelgiocondo Ripe al Convento Riserva 2004

95 points | \$100 | 150 cases imported | Red

Subtle, yet intense aromas of blackberries, blueberries and flowers, with just a hint of vanilla bean. Full bodied, with lovely berry, chocolate and spice flavors that follow through to a firm and racy finish. Best after 2012.—*J.S.*

VITANZA

Brunello di Montalcino Riserva 2004

95 points | \$78 | 85 cases imported | Red

Love the aromas of dried flowers, with licorice, blueberries and minerals. Full body, with super racy and pretty tannins here. Plenty of subtle fruit and an ultra-long finish. Always fine and particularly in this vintage. Best after 2012.—*J.S.*

CASTELLO BANFI

Brunello di Montalcino Poggio all'Oro Riserva 2004

94 points | \$150 | 125 cases imported | Red

Blackberry and blueberry aromas that are focused and ultra-clean. Full body, with a deep core of pretty fruit and very polished tannins that go on and on. Very closed and tight right now, but will open into something very special indeed. Best after 2011.—*J.S.*

PALAZZO

Brunello di Montalcino Riserva 2004

94 points | \$65 | 125 cases imported | Red

Violets and dried dark fruits on the nose. Full body, with chewy tannins, with a meaty, toasted oak and sultana aftertaste. Lots of dark chocolate. Opulent Brunello. Best after 2010.—*J.S.*

CAPANNA

Brunello di Montalcino Riserva 2004

93 points | \$90 | 250 cases imported | Red

Crushed raspberry and blueberries on the nose, with hints of roses and lilacs. Full body, with a wonderful core of ripe fruit and chewy tannins. Long and structured. Best after 2012.—*J.S.*

CIACCI PICCOLOMINI D'ARAGONA

Brunello di Montalcino Vigna di Pianrosso Riserva 2004

93 points | \$115 | 500 cases imported | Red

Raisin and dried fruit cake aromas follow through to a full body, with soft and velvety tannins. This is big and juicy, with plenty of fruit and attractive tannins. Plenty of new wood, too, but all comes together beautifully. Best after 2011.—*J.S.*

LA COLOMBINA

Brunello di Montalcino Riserva 2004

93 points | \$85 | 165 cases imported | Red

Mushrooms, toffee and opulent fruit on the nose. Full body, with loads of decadent and ripe berry, coffee and dark chocolate character. Big and juicy. Best after 2012.—*J.S.*

LA GERLA

Brunello di Montalcino Vigna gli Angeli Riserva 2004

93 points | \$85 | 165 cases imported | Red

Wonderfully intensity to the nose, with blackberries and blueberries. Full body, with a solid palate of ripe fruit and firm, chewy tannins. This is not giving that much on the palate, but the rich texture and structure suggests an outstanding riserva. Best after 2012.—*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.

UCCELLIERA

Brunello di Montalcino Riserva 2004

98 points | \$130 | 210 cases imported | Red

Asphalt and tar, with lots of dry dark fruits on the nose. Full and very powerful, with layers of chewy tannins and masses of fruit. Really needs time to mellow and come together, but it's all there. A blockbuster that is balanced and fabulous. Best after 2012.

From Italy.—J.S.

COLLEMATTONI

Brunello di Montalcino Vigna Fontelontano Riserva 2004

97 points | \$85 | 50 cases imported | Red

So much milk chocolate and ripe fruit on the nose. Full body, with loads of ripe fruit and toasted oak, but it all finishes in a subtle and beautiful way. What a long and amazing finish. Best after 2011.

From Italy.—J.S.

TERRALSOLE

Brunello di Montalcino Riserva 2004

96 points | \$69 | 1,050 cases imported | Red

This wine changes all the time as you taste it. Aromas of dark fruit and porcini mushroom go to cigar box and dried flowers. Full body, with masses of fruit and chewy tannins. This is really powerful and long. Best wine ever from here. Best after 2011. *From Italy.—J.S.*

VALDICAVA

Brunello di Montalcino Madonna del Piano Riserva 2004

96 points | \$179 | 700 cases imported | Red

Intense aromas of blackberries, blueberries and minerals, with just the right amount of licorice and minerals. Full body, with silky tannins and a beautiful finish. So much going on here. Best after 2012. *From Italy.—J.S.*

WINE SPECTATOR'S TASTERS

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Wine Spectator's tasting staff includes 14 people in three offices. They work together to review more than 18,000 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 Napa, New York and Tuscany. 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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Joined *Wine Spectator* in 1988. Tasting beat: Austria, Greece, Portugal, southern France

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Joined *Wine Spectator* in 1988. Tasting beat: New York, Spain

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Joined *Wine Spectator* in 1983. Tasting beat: Australia, New Zealand, Oregon, Washington

James Suckling European bureau chief, Italy

Joined *Wine Spectator* in 1981. Tasting beat: Bordeaux, Italy, Port

Tasting staff:

Tim Fish (California),

Alison Napjus (Alsace),

MaryAnn Worobiec (California)

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 |