

GRAPE BEGINNINGS

WINE SPECTATOR TOP 100 OF 2009

#3 DOMAINE DU VIEUX TELEGRAPHE CHATEAUNEUF-DU-PAPE LA CRAU 2007 95 POINTS

Packed, in a brawny, muscular style atypical for this lush vintage, with a gravelly undertow to the currant paste, braised fig and dark licorice notes. Picks up even more steam on the finish, with grilled mesquite, mineral and *garrigue* notes and a long, hot stone-filled finish. Best from 2010 through 2030. 17,000 cases made. –JM

#21 NEYERS CHARDONNAY CARNEROS 2007 93 POINTS

Complex aromas of smoke, fig and citrus fold over to the palate. Full-bodied, with fine structure and acidity, along with flavors that end up giving this a delicate feel. The aftertaste is delicious. Drink now through 2012. 5,600 cases made. –JL

#23 LEWIS CHARDONNAY RUSSIAN RIVER VALLEY 2007 95 POINTS

This opulent, full-bodied Chardonnay delivers amazing richness, focus, complexity and range of flavor. Concentrated pear, fig and citrus notes have a nice smoky, toasty oak overlay. The finish is bold and complex, with touches of butterscotch. Drink now through 2011. 1,200 cases made. –JL

#61 MONTE ANTICO SANGIOVESE-MERLOT-CABERNET SAUVIGNON TOSCANA 2006 90 POINTS

Bright plum, dried cherry and flowers on the nose. Full-bodied, with fine tannins and refined berry and cherry flavors. Drink now. 80,000 cases made. –JS

#69 BODEGA CATENA ZAPATA MALBEC MENDOZA 2007 91 POINTS

A sleek, polished style, with alluring mocha and raspberry ganache notes leading the way, backed by dark plum, hoisin sauce and graphite flavors that push through the finish. This has serious weight, but stays focused and driven. Drink now through 2011. 60,000 cases imported. –JM

#76 CLOS LA COUTALE CAHORS 2007 90 POINTS

There's a sense of elegance to the well-defined, concentrated flavors of dark cherry, blackberry and plum, followed by notes of sage, dark chocolate and tobacco leaf on the long, powerful finish. Drink now. 5,000 cases imported. –KM

#80 ARGIANO TOSCANA NON CONFUNDITUR 2007 91 POINTS

Offers an interesting combination of currant, raspberry and meat on the nose. Full-bodied, with chewy tannins and a spicy dried fruit aftertaste. Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Sangiovese and Syrah. Best after 2011. 9,200 cases made. –JS