

Anthony Dias

Blue

Reviews



Every month I will be offering recommendations of currently available wines and spirits. These are my favorites from the more than 500 wines and 50 or so spirits I taste each month. The opinions are solely my own and in no way have any commercial considerations been brought to bear on my selections. I rate these products on the 100-point scale and nothing printed here will have scored less than 85.

Wines and spirits are rated as follows: 85-89 VERY GOOD; 90-94 OUTSTANDING; 95-100 CLASSIC. Although scores are a good guideline, these recommendations will more useful if you read the comments as well. - Anthony Dias Blue

WINE

RECOMMENDATIONS

(Prices listed are suggested retail)

DOMESTIC

89 Tolosa 2005 Chardonnay, No-Oak, Edna Valley (\$16) Keep your eyes on the Edna Valley, especially this harmonious beauty with ripe pear fruit and expressive varietal character.

DIRECT DISTRIBUTION 805-901-9455



91 Tangent 2005 Albariño, Jack Ranch, Edna Valley (\$17) Started by the younger generation of the Baileyana clan and dedicated to all not-Chardonnay, this one's bursting with fresh, juicy peach and citrus and is totally delicious.

WINE WAREHOUSE



92 Voss Vineyards 2005 Estate Sauvignon Blanc, Napa Valley (\$19) A blast of tropical fruit and citrus opens the proceedings with gorgeous acid structure and spice to follow;

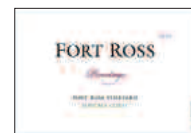
long, luscious and lovely.

HENRY WINE GROUP

89 HdV 2005 De La Guerra Chardonnay, Hyde Vineyard, Los Carneros (\$35) De La Guerra is a new series of wines from HdV (a joint venture between Napa's Hyde family and Burgundy's Aubert de Villaine); the inaugural Chard is clean and well-made with fresh acidity and dancing flavors.

WILSON DANIELS LTD.

90 Fort Ross 2003 Pinotage, Sonoma Coast (\$32) Dense and spicy with deep, ripe and fleshy plum and berry flavors. Might just be the best Pinotage anywhere.



MONTEREY BAY WINE CO.

92 Patz & Hall 2005 Chardonnay, Zio Tony Vineyard, Russian River Valley (\$55) Aromatic and explosive with stunning fruit and bright minerality; long, juicy and balanced with depth and lots of charm.

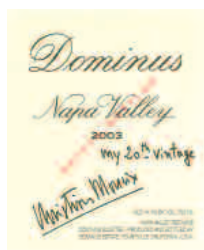
GRAPE VINE WINE COMPANY

91 Steele Wines 2004 Pinot Noir, Durell Vineyard, Carneros (\$30) Bright and juicy with fresh red cherry fruit and sweet oak; long, racy and spicy.

AMERICAN WINE & SPIRITS

90 McCrea Cellars 2003 Syrah, Boushey Grande Côte Vineyard, Yakima Valley (\$46) Dense and musky, layered and ripe; concentrated and rich.

NORTHWEST WINES LTD.



94 Dominus Estate 2003, Napanook Vineyard, Napa Valley (\$109) A labor of love, elegantly expressed with zippy plum fruit, dusty tannins and a classy finish.

WINE WAREHOUSE

92 Staglin Family Vineyards 2003 Cabernet Sauvignon, Rutherford, Napa Valley (\$135) Lush and super-ripe with sweet plum and oak; powerful and luscious with spice and toasty oak.

STRANGE WINES

IMPORTS

88 Matua Valley 2004 Chardonnay, Judd Estate, Gisborne (\$17) What do you do after producing New Zealand's first Sauvignon Blanc? How about a lively, tangy Chardonnay with searing acidity.

SOUTHERN WINE & SPIRITS



90 Taltarni 2003 Brut Taché, Victoria & Tasmania (\$20) This Aussie sparkler is pale pink, aromatic and bright with lovely crisp raspberry and tangy apple fruit.

SOUTHERN WINE & SPIRITS

89 Don Olegario 2004 Albariño, Rias Baixas (\$21) Spain's Galicia region is on a roll; brisk and fresh with pure, mouth-filling fruit and lively acidity.



YOUNG'S MARKET

91 Schloss Göbelsburg 2005 Grüner Veltliner, Steinsetz, Langenlois (\$22) This long and exceptional Austrian white could be the best Grüner I've ever tasted; elegant and remarkably complex with peachy fruit and lovely depth and excellent balance.

WINEWISE 510-848-6879



89 Poderi Colla 2005 Pian Balbo, Dolcetto d'Alba (\$16) Fresh and bright with explosive berry fruit and notes of spice and tobacco; juicy and long with racy and balanced flavors.

WINE WAREHOUSE

90 Canonbah Bridge 2002 Shiraz, Drought Reserve, New South Wales (\$30) Cinnamon and vanilla spice lead to a core of concentrated blackberry fruit and notes of bacon and licorice in this persistent Aussie import.

WINE WAREHOUSE

90 Perrin & Fils 2003 Châteauneuf-du-Pape Les Sinards (\$34) The French "Rhône Rangers" behind Tablas Creek avoid the overripeness which plagued many '03s and deliver a smooth, racy and complex winner.

REGAL WINE



93 Masi 1999 Serego Alighieri, Amarone della Valpolicella Vaio Amaron (\$75) Made from the fourteenth-century estate of descendants of the poet Dante. Deep, dense and extracted with opulent fruit just this side of being jammy. Whoa!

YOUNG'S MARKET

88 San Bokbunja Refined Wild Berry Wine, (\$7, 375 ml.) Bright cherry and berry fruit and racy acidity like this makes this Korean product a good match with spicy barbecue.

YW WINE DISTRIBUTORS 800-980-4989

89 Bodegas Julian Chivite 2000 Tempranillo, Conde de la Salceda, Rioja (\$40)

Ripe, dense and loaded with rich plum and black currant fruit; deep, long and fleshy with complexity and balance.

YOUNG'S MARKET

WINE

BY THE GLASS & VALUE RECOMMENDATIONS



88 Bloom 2005 Riesling, Mosel-Saar-Ruwer (\$8)

Racy and bright with juicy peach and honeysuckle; lively, long and bracing; simply delicious.

COASTAL

89 Covey Run 2005 Winemaker's Collection Late Harvest Riesling, Columbia Valley (\$13)

Juicy and fresh with ripe peach flavors and lovely acid structure; long, balanced and charming.

SOUTHERN WINE & SPIRITS



89 Torres Family 2005 Viña Esmeralda, Cataluña (\$14)

This tantalizing Moscatel-Gewürz blend shows why the Torres family has been linked with wine for more than three centuries; smooth and spicy with aromatics, fresh fruit and soft texture.

SOUTHERN WINE & SPIRITS



89 Kenwood 2005 Reserve Sauvignon Blanc, Sonoma (\$15)

Juicy, bright grapefruit and lively citrus acidity; long, racy and fresh with balance and style.

YOUNG'S MARKET

88 Carmichael 2005 Grigio e Bianco, Monterey (\$15)

Why Not Golf?

Jess Jackson and Château Lassegué

Did you know Jess Jackson was retired? Evidently, neither did he. Though he officially announced his retirement as chairman of Kendall-Jackson Wine Estates in 2001, Jess is still very much on the go, with properties the world over - Villa Arceno in Tuscany, Calina in Chile, Yangarra Park in Australia and ever increasing ownership in California (hello Freemark Abbey, Byron and Arrowood). Château Lassegué represents the first Jackson property in France.

Jess and his wife Barbara Banke have partnered with old Bordeaux hand Pierre Seillan and his wife Monique to produce Lassegué, as well as second wine from the same property, Château Vignot. Pierre has been making wine with Jackson since 1997 and is responsible for some of the flagship California projects, including Vérité and Archipel, both Bordeaux-style red blends. Before that, Seillan spent two decades as the technical director and winemaker at seven different Bordeaux châteaux.



Jackson is a viticultural bloodhound who can sniff out great terroir from a helicopter flyover. This estate in Saint Émilion was purchased from the Freylon family. Monsieur Freylon, an expert viticulturist, planted the 60 acres of vineyards between 30 and 45 years ago. The vineyards have an ideal exposure that allows them to be bathed in sunlight all day long. Two restored sundials are featured prominently on the property and have been adopted as the emblem of Château Lassegué.

Though 2003 was a difficult first vintage because of the extreme heat, the '03 Lassegué (\$50, 92 points) is a lovely, ripe - but not too ripe - wine bursting with clean plum and fresh acidity. It's long, pure and beautifully balanced, showing rich fruit, soft oak and excellent breeding. With a typically Right Bank encépagement of 65% Merlot, 30% Cabernet Franc, and 5% Cabernet Sauvignon, the 2003 is long, pure and beautifully balanced, showing rich fruit, soft oak, and excellent breeding. This is an auspicious debut wrapped in a gorgeous package. The 2003 Château Vignot is bright and edgy with nice mineral and spice complexity wrapped around clean, balanced fruit with a long, smoky finish.

Not bad for a guy who's retired.

Château Lassegué wines are distributed by Regal Wine Company.

Former KJ winemaker Michael Leven puts his heart and soul into this generous, intense and lively blend of Grigio, Sauv Blanc and Chardonnay.

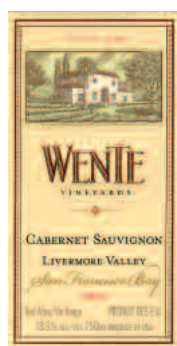
VIN WEST INTERNATIONAL

87 Gallo Family Vineyards NV Twin Valley Hearty Burgundy, California (\$5) This is a remarkably decent glass of wine; smooth and ripe with clean, juicy fruit and lively acid structure; long, bright, focused and showing notes of herb and berry fruit.

GALLO

88 Valentin Bianchi 2005 Elsa Malbec, Mendoza (\$9) A racy and clean Argentine value with juicy plum fruit and lively spice; long, balanced and quite charming.

YOUNG'S MARKET



89 Wente Vineyards 2003 Cabernet Sauvignon, Livermore Valley - San Francisco Bay (\$13) From California's oldest continuously family run winery, this deal of a wine expresses lovely plum

fruit with charming notes of oak and spice.

SOUTHERN WINE & SPIRITS

89 Five Rivers 2005 Pinot Noir, Central Coast (\$13) Brisk and lively with fresh, juicy cherry fruit; very clean, bright and long with charming flavors. Wow!

YOUNG'S MARKET



90 Cline Cellars 2005 Carignane, Contra Costa County (\$16) Juicy, bright and bursting with blackberry fruit and spice; racy,

clean and long with lovely flavors and a stunning finish.

AMERICAN WINE AND SPIRITS

SPIRITS



92 Shustov No. 28 Vodka (\$19) A smooth, hearty Russian entry with thick texture and dry flavors with true vodka depth and style; notes of peach, spice and rich peppery flavors.

SOUTHERN WINE & SPIRITS

90 Flor de Caña Centenario Gold 18 Year Old Rum (\$40) Rich, dense and ripe with spice, smooth texture and a lingering finish; from Nicaragua.



SOUTHERN WINE & SPIRITS



93 Stillwater Spirits Grappa Cole Ranch Cabernet Sauvignon Mendocino (\$50) A single-vineyard grappa; fleshy and spicy with dense flavors and lovely grappa quality; quite elegant, with complexity and depth.

DIRECT DISTRIBUTION

707-778-6041



Zen Green Tea Liqueur (\$30)

Clear, yellow green color, smooth, very sweet with tea flavors and silky texture, with a really long aftertaste.

SOUTHERN WINE & SPIRITS

90 Wisner's Very Old Blended Canadian Whisky (\$26) Sweet caramel nose; silky and smooth with some nice mel-low oak and toasty flavors; rich and long; an ideal mixing whisky.

YOUNG'S MARKET

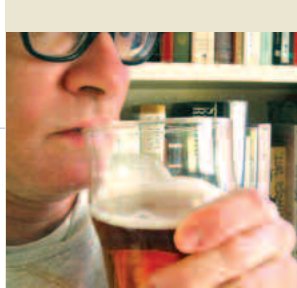
94 The Glenlivet Nadurra 16 Years Old (\$60) Beautiful, smooth and rich with elegant vanilla oak, lovely spice and dried fruits; a strong beginning, a rich middle and a complex finish. Magnificent. Nadurra is Gaelic for "natural."

YOUNG'S MARKET



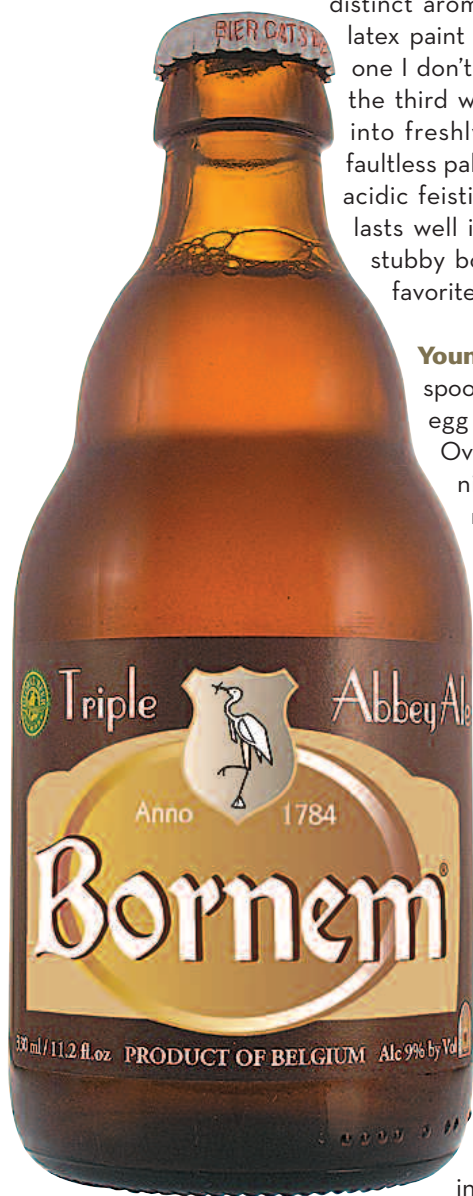
Cocktails by Jenn Appletini (\$20) The Appletini in this nothing-if-not-cute line of girly pre-mixed cocktails shows surprisingly fresh flavors of apple and citrus; bright, juicy and pure. This and the other flavors—Lemon Drop, Cosmopolitan, Blue Lagoon and seasonal Chocolate Peppermint Martini—are available in 750 ml. bottles or as a plastic tote with four 100-ml. singles. Definitely not for Arnold.

SOUTHERN WINE & SPIRITS



By David Gadd

Gadd's Six-Pack



Bornem Triple Abbey Ale At first the nose has a distinct aroma of Sherwin-Williams semigloss latex paint – not a bad smell, mind you, but one I don't normally expect from a beer. On the third whiff, however, it curiously segues into freshly peeled Anjou pear. Voila! The faultless palate is ripe (pears, again) yet full of acidic feistiness and a lacquered finish that lasts well into the night. By the end of the stubby bottle, this has become one of my favorite Belgians.

Young's Special London Ale Take a spoon and lift the head: it stays put like egg whites beaten into soft peaks. Overly modest on the nose, this burnished brew only reveals the full monty on the palate, where the positively sublime bitterness is balanced by a mouthfeel softer than the London fog and voluptuously full, ripe fruit-and-malt flavors. A masterwork, and one of the beers I'll hope to see in heaven.

North Coast Brewing Scrimshaw Pilsner One of North Coast's more delicate brews, with subtle, finely-engraved flavors of barley malt, a page of erudite bitterness torn out of Melville, and a finish that lingers as hauntingly on the palate as a humpback's mating song piercing the Mendocino mists. Pair this with a plate of fresh-shucked oysters and pick up Moby-Dick where you left off in sophomore year.



Thames Welsh ESB I've had more extra, more special, and more bitter beers, but this Extra Special Bitter from Wales certainly has its heart in the right place. The chocolatey malt flavor reminds me of eating spoonfuls of Hershey's cocoa powder as a kid. It's not exactly as hopsy as one would expect from this style, but maybe that's just the way

they like it in Wales. Extra points if you can recite Dylan Thomas while hoisting the glass.

North Coast Brewing Old Rasputin Russian Imperial Stout A monstrously evil brew that will throw a hex on you quicker than Svengali at a Ouija board sleepover. At a trance-inducing 9 percent abv, this blackly magical stuff should really be entrusted only to adepts of the psychic arts born east of the Volga; but, for the time being at least, it's also available in handy fourpacks to guileless laymen whose idea of telepathy is predicting NFL passing yardage. A specially aged tenth anniversary version will be released soon. Now look into my eyes . . .

North Coast Brewing Brother Thelonious Abbey Ale Don't you just love 750 milliliter bottles? By glass three (straight, no chaser) and a few jazz tracks in, I was heavily digging the crepuscular color of this superb Belgian-style "abbey" ale, dedicated to our very own American monastic jazz maestro. Flavors as complex and challenging as a Monk chord cluster, nutty and completely mysterious. North Coast makes a contribution for every case sold to the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz.

North Country Fare: North Coast Brewing

After spending two years in England in the 1970s, a time when the Campaign for Real Ale was revolutionizing the British beer industry, Mark Ruedrich became inspired. When he returned to the States, he delved into brewing. "For a couple of years I amped it up a bit," says Ruedrich; "I studied all the standard texts on brewing and visited breweries that were already up and running."

Ruedrich's degree in zoology and marine biology helped. "Biology is a great background for a brewer," he says; "I had a good head start." By 1988, Ruedrich and two friends were ready to start their own operation: North Coast Brewing in the coastal community of Fort Bragg. Along with Anderson Valley and Mendocino Brewing, it was one of Mendocino's pioneers. "There were fewer than 50 breweries all told in the United States when we started," says Ruedrich; "now there are more than 1400."

Starting small, as a brewpub housed in a former mortuary, the company expanded in 1994 and built a brewery directly across the street from the original taproom. Today, North Coast puts out around 25,000 barrels a year, but has the capacity to grow to 40,000. The brewery is certified organic by Oregon Tilth, an internationally recognized organization that promotes holistic agriculture.

Now found in 35 states, the North Coast label is also making inroads in Europe and Asia. They're one of the few American craftbrew brands recently authorized for sale in Sweden's state-owned monopoly stores, and are also exporting to Japan. "The Europeans' response to our beers has been tremendous," Ruedrich remarks, "and we have other export projects coming up."

"We've also been committed to jazz since our earliest days," says Ruedrich, "but [senior VP and national marketing director] Doug Moody has taken it to a different level." Moody runs his own jazz radio station on the coast and has recently hooked North Coast up with the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz, which receives a contribution for each case of Brother Thelonious Ale sold.

Logistically, remote Fort Bragg is a tough place to brew beer, but Ruedrich wouldn't have done it anywhere else.

"We didn't compromise," he says, "and I'm glad we didn't." North Coast beers are distributed by Wine Warehouse.



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Story and photos by David Gadd

Brewing Up A Storm: Reed's Ginger Brew

Reed's Ginger Brew HQ is tucked away in an industrial district south of downtown Los Angeles. CEO Chris Reed is a trained chemical engineer who once worked in the oil and gas industry. He began experimenting with ginger brews in his Venice, California, kitchen back in 1987 and after testing 90-some recipes, he finally hit on the one that would launch, two years later, as Reed's Ginger Brew. The quickly growing company now produces 65,000 barrels of natural sodas a year under the Reed's, Virgil's and China Cola brands, including ginger brews, cream soda, colas, and root beer.

"We consider ourselves craft brewers," says Reed, "just very unusual ones. We don't make sodas, we brew them." Reed scrambles up the metal ladder to the top of one of the brew tanks. "I study a lot of arcane things," he smiles, as he tells me how the Chinese government "mass-dosed" the populace with therapeutic herbal medicine disguised as soda, and explains how Sir Walter Raleigh got rich by trading in New World sassafras (used in root beer) as a youth enhancer. Who knew soda could be so interesting?

Reed's is going public now, but, typically, Chris Reed is doing it in a different fashion. Consumers can purchase common stock in the company for \$4 a share, an offering made by way of a neck tag attached to Reed's bottles. The plan is to raise \$8 million for new infrastructure and marketing personnel. "We're the Coke of natural foods," Reed quips.



Reed's Extra Ginger Brew This is the hard-core stuff that soda addicts move on to after "experimenting" with Sprite. The nose is pure fresh-baked gingerbread cooling on a kitchen counter. Makes one helluva Shirley Temple.

DRINK IT STRAIGHT AT: your AA meeting
FOR KICKS ADD: Bacardi Superior Rum

Reed's Premium Jamaican Style Ginger Brew A no-fructose version of Reed's flagship,

sweetened with honey and pineapple juice. Dreadlocks not required, but cueing up some Bob Marley will help white guys feel infinitely more tuned-in while drinking it.

DRINK IT STRAIGHT AT: volleyball on the beach
FOR KICKS ADD: Appleton Estate V/X Rum

Reed's Cherry Ginger Brew This one comes out of left field and wallops you just above the uvula with intense cherry flavors swathed in an aromatic gingery-peppery robe. My favorite kicker in the Reed's chorus line.

DRINK IT STRAIGHT AT: a Phish show
FOR KICKS ADD: Absolut Vodka

Virgil's Root Beer Screw apple pie—does it get any more all-American than root beer? Swilling this rich, wholesome stuff is like getting stuck in a Jimmy Stewart movie: it's too sweet, but would you have it any other way?

DRINK IT STRAIGHT AT: a town meeting
FOR KICKS ADD: Bombay Sapphire Gin

Virgil's Cream Soda A big, old-fashioned mouthful of soda with round—even opulent—flavors of vanilla with caramel overtones. As creamy as promised, but it couldn't hurt to add a scoop of vanilla Häagen-Dazs.

DRINK IT STRAIGHT AT: an ice-cream social
FOR KICKS ADD: Southern Comfort

China Cola Nice and dry on the entry and as grippy on the palate as a new set of Michelines. I can practically feel my yin and yang being readjusted while I sip on this stuff. Just like acupuncture, but without the needles.

DRINK IT STRAIGHT AT: your Pilates studio
FOR KICKS ADD: Knob Creek bourbon

