

Wine Spectator

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14 California Reds Under \$40

New reviews of Pinot Noirs and Rhône-style reds at attractive prices

MaryAnn Worobiec

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Tasting Highlights bring the best of the past week's tastings of California wines to WineSpectator.com members.

This week's focus is on red wines priced under \$40, including five wines that cost half that or less. There are a lot of standouts in this group, both for quality and value.

The top-scoring wines include a pair of Rhône blends from Prospect 772, a brand founded by Ron Pieretti and Wendy Sanda, tapping the talents of winemaker Jeff Cohn. Based out of Calaveras County in the Sierra foothills, Prospect 772 has developed a reputation for consistent, intense and detailed wines.

Retro Cellars has a terrific Petite Sirah in this week's mix, from Mike and Kara Dunn. The two grew up in the wine industry; Kara is the daughter of vintner Robert Pecot, and Mike is the son of Randy Dunn. Their wine is bold and aromatic.

It's worth nothing that Cline Cellars has made three great wines for under \$20, including two made from grapes from little-known Contra Costa County, which is located just east of Oakland.

AUTONOM Syrah California Law of Proportions 2008 Score: 92 | \$38

Tests the law of proportions in a beneficial way, stuffing rich blackberry, black licorice, tar and baked berries into a potent mix; full blown and not for those prone to fainting. Drink now through 2020. 50 cases made. —J.L.

NEYERS Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast Roberts Road 2010 Score: 92 | \$35

Mature, with complex dried berry, anise and savory herb, reaching into damp forest floor, black tea and mushroomy notes that are long and persistent. Drink now through 2020. 179 cases made. —J.L.

PROSPECT 772 The Brat Sierra Foothills 2009 Score: 92 | \$36

Hardly a brat, this offers a tight, spicy mix of wild berry, fresh earth, mineral and cedar, Full-bodied and firmly tannic, framing the flavors nicely. Ends with a mineral-laced raspberry core that's fresh and spicy. Grenache and Syrah. Another delightful new wine from this producer. Drink now through 2020. 283 cases made. —J.L.

PROSPECT 772 The Brawler Sierra Foothills 2009 Score: 92 | \$36

A potent, rich and graceful mix of scorched earth, dried berry, roasted herb and spices, all tightly focused, with muscular yet well-integrated tannins. Ends in a long, persistent finish with shades of melted licorice. Syrah and Viognier. Best from 2013 through 2023. 173 cases made. —J.L.

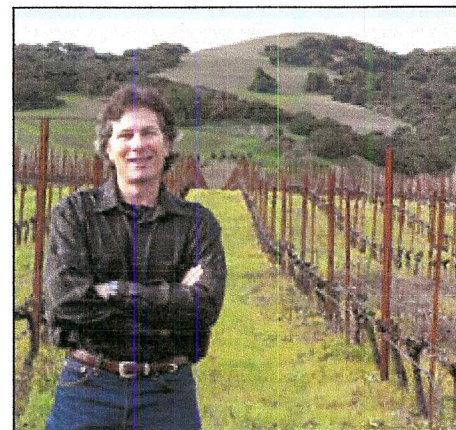
JOSEPH SWAN Syrah Russian River Valley Trenton Estate Vineyard 2006

Score: 92 | \$28

Notably complex and stylish, with hot brick, dark and dried berries, roasted herb and cedar. Full-bodied and rustic, yet it's that edginess and complex finish that make it so compelling. Best from 2013 through 2023. 149 cases made. —J.L.

ALTA COLINA GSM Paso Robles 2009 Score: 90 | \$38

Intense tar, black licorice and dense berry flavors are rich and extracted, gaining detail, with



Courtesy of Cline Cellars

Winemaker Charlie Tsegeletos has produced some noteworthy values at Cline Cellars.

See Also:

Monday, November 14, 2011

13 Napa Standouts

Friday, November 11, 2011

17 Sparkling Wines for \$17 or Less

Friday, November 4, 2011

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Monday, October 31, 2011

15 Sonoma Syrahs, Pinot Noirs and More

Friday, October 28, 2011

15 Top-Rated Loire Reds

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Tuesday, November 15, 2011

Living History

Tuesday, November 15, 2011

2001 California Cabernets Shine 10 Years Later

Tuesday, November 15, 2011

Nearing the Summit

ALTA COLINA Syrah Paso Robles Toasted Slope 2009 Score: 90 | \$38

Aromas of ripe plum, blackberry, even a touch of roasted fig, mix well with the firm tannic backbone. Shows a spicy, tarry edge on the finish, where the tannins gain muscle. Drink now through 2020. 168 cases made. —J.L.

Tuesday, November 15, 2011
Alphabetical Guide to California
Cabernet

KAENA Grenache Santa Ynez Valley Larner Vineyard 2008 Score: 90 | \$35

Rich, plush, deep and stylish, with a center of juicy blackberry, huckleberry and spice. Open -knit and ready to drink. Fruity aftertaste. Drink now through 2017. 100 cases made. —J.L.

More from topic California

RETRO Petite Sirah Howell Mountain Old Vine 2007 Score: 90 | \$36

Nicely done, with aromatic details of smoke and violets and plenty of peppery highlights to the wild black berry, mineral and plum flavors. Plenty of vibrancy to the fruit flavors, and a rustic, chewy, tannic profile. Drink now through 2020. 270 cases made. —M.W.

STICKYBEAK Syrah Napa County 2008 Score: 89 | \$20

Generous and easy drinking, with rich, complex dark berry flavors that are smooth-textured, deep and persistent, losing a little traction on the finish, ending with a minerally edge. Drink now through 2017. 800 cases made. —J.L.

CLINE Carignane Contra Costa County Ancient Vines 2010 Score: 88 | \$16

Attractive floral, plum and raspberry aromas are elegant and complex, offering a spicy, juicy edge and ending with supple tannins. Drink now through 2018. 2,568 cases made. —J.L.

CLINE Mourvèdre Contra Costa County Ancient Vines 2010 Score: 88 | \$16

Well-focused mint and wild berry fruit is supple and generous, with a spicy, road-tar edge. Well-balanced, intense yet graceful. Drink now through 2018. 14,788 cases made. —J.L.

CLINE Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast Cool Climate 2009 Score: 88 | \$17

A touch clipped, tight and firm, with berry, mineral, cedar and sage. Full-bodied, with a minerally edge on the finish. Drink now through 2022. 5,300 cases made. —J.L.

BEDROCK Shebang! Fourth Cuvée North Coast NV Score: 87 | \$12

Chunky and chewy, but not shy on rustic berry flavors, with wild berry and blackberry and minerally notes. Syrah, Petite Sirah and Zinfandel. Drink now through 2016. 3,000 cases made. —J.L.