

Publisher's PICKS

In each issue THE TASTING PANEL's Publisher and Executive Editor, Meridith May, selects her favorite wines and spirits of the month. Check here for the latest arrivals in our offices, the hottest new brands on the market and an occasional revisited classic.



PHOTO: ERICA BARTHEL

Meridith May with Maximilian Riedel, 11th generation glassware designer. Photo taken at the SLS Hotel, Beverly Hills.

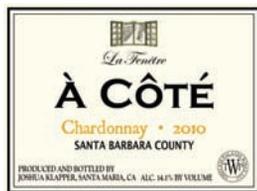
WINES



VML Winery 2010 Chardonnay, Russian River Valley (\$25) Winemaker Virginia Marie Lambrix conjures a soulful white, drenching the palate in a textured film of lemon and peach cream, backed by gemstone minerality. **93**



Lava Cap Winery 2009 American River Red Celebrated Cuvée, El Dorado (\$18) A blend of cherry sweetness and bitter espresso shot. Textured with creamy soil-toffee smokiness and a touch of mint on the back, along with mountain sage. The Syrah/Merlot/Cab Franc and Zin blend is surely a celebration. **89**



La Fenêtre 2010 Chardonnay, À Côté, Santa Barbara County (\$19) Winemaker Joshua Klapper gets it right: Steely

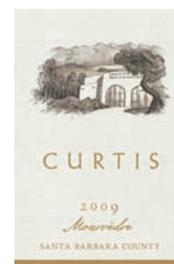
and wonderfully refreshing, the sharply spiced fruit is awake and alive, glass slippers on stone with a fresh, fleshy underbelly that offers up lime and lemon peels. Finishes clean, in a scent not unlike freshly washed linens. **93**

MONTEREY BAY WINE COMPANY



Curtis Winery 2009 Mourvèdre, Santa Barbara County (\$25) Animal notes, musky and alluring, softened by a round mouth. Almost Pinot Noir-esque in its delicacy and ethereal beauty. **90**

FOLEY FAMILY WINES



Summers Winery 2008 Chardonnay, La Nude, Monterey County (\$28) Creamy, with defined tropical fruit (pineapple and mango!) and a crisp finish that most whites only aspire to. **92**



Michael David 2010 Earthquake Zinfandel, Lodi (\$26) Trembling with density and black as pitch, this licorice-lined Zin opens up to dark cherries, dessert spices (clove, nutmeg, cinnamon) woven in earth. **92**



Shai Cellars 2009 Adome, Santa Ynez Valley (\$34) Topline of ripe fruit, wrapped in mocha. This blend of 65% Syrah and 35% Cab Sauv defines Santa Ynez's focus and lush drinkability—it's a true gift (Shai is Hebrew for "gift"). **94**



Sausal Winery 2009 Zinfandel, Century Vines, Alexander Valley (\$40) A wine can be described as velvet not only for its textural but for its sensorial qualities. In this case, a warming effect occurs as we wrap our palate in this old-vine Zin's plush plum-to-blueberry quilt. We can't help but express the sensation with "Ahhhh" at every sip. **95**



Worthy of a smooch.

French-style double bizou.

Wildly infatuated.

Seriously smitten.

Head over heels in love.



La Fenêtre 2009 Pinot Noir, Le Bon Climat Vineyard, Santa Maria Valley (\$50)

Famer's market raspberry jam tops a porcini mushroom, outlined with a #2 pencil and delicately sprinkled with white pepper. She's an Earth Mother of a wine, Old World-spirited, entertaining minerals and dried fruits. **96**

MONTEREY BAY WINE COMPANY



Yorkville Cellars 2009 Carmenère, Yorkville Highlands (\$32) This red gets extra smooches just for its sip-ability. A dreamy session of fruit-teasing weediness that

was rather sexy in its alternate personality. **93**



Inman Family Winery 2008 Pinot Noir, Olivet Grange Vineyard, Russian River Valley (\$56) Feather-pillow plushness, delicately spiced. Essence of rose dust, jasmine and sencha green tea make this an exotic sip. The fruit is vibrant, red and juicy—from raspberry to rhubarb. **95**



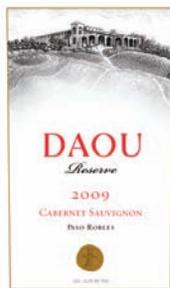
Domaine Boyar 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve, Bulgaria (\$9) Old World acidity is accented by a fruity middle: plums, blackberry and melting cocoa are icing on the cake with a regal quality that brings the wine down to earth. **90**

BULGARIAN MASTER VINTNERS



Daou Vineyards 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve, Paso Robles (\$56)

A snapshot of earthy white pepper with a raspberry core sets off this dense, intense violet muse. Its linear, extracted body is more structure than splash, but what zooms into focus is tremendous clarity of character. **93**



Peter Lehmann 2009 Clancy's Red Shiraz Cabernet Merlot, Barossa Valley (\$17) Big, bright and juicy—and scented with jasmine flowers. A lingering treat of sweet plums (and their skins), raspberries and chocolate along with a dot of white pepper adds to the art of the slurp. **91**

HESS COLLECTION



Benessere 2009 Old Vines Zinfandel, Holystone-Collins Vineyard, Napa Valley (\$32) A sensational Zinfandel: elegant, refined, holding up a trophy of perfectly ripened summer fruit—distinctly flavorful rhubarb, blueberry and plums dusted with rose petals. Feminine, floral and lithe. **94**

SPIRITS



Vida Blanco Tequila, Mexico (\$40) Clay and earth are far forward on the nose, with elements of cooked agave. A bit hot on the tongue—pepper and evergreen elements sizzle on the tongue through a tobacco-laden finish. **89**



VIDA IMPORTS



Luna Nueva 2012 Silver Tequila, Mexico (\$39) Salty peanut brittle nose, with a side of sweet cooked agave. The first sip is good, but every subsequent sip brings a greater passion of oatmeal, lime and toffee. The agave kicks in every nanosecond. **93**



LCG INTERNATIONAL



C by Courvoisier, France (\$35) This double-barrel aged cognac has an opulent nose of orange meringue; perfumed, heady scents of bittersweet orange biscuits fresh from the oven play havoc on my appetite. The palate is nectar-textured: passion fruit, apricot and mandarin orange. **93**



Strawberry Cloud:

- Fill a glass with ice
- Add 2oz Rock Saké Cloud
- Add 2oz **funkin** Strawberry Daiquiri Mix
- Stir and garnish with strawberry

LESS THAN 100 CALORIES



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