

NOVEMBER WINES, 2008

▶ All wines we taste and review are current releases and can be found and purchased locally, at the winery or on the web ◀

GRENACHE – THE NEW PINOT NOIR!

Sometimes you get nudged down the “Yellow Brick Road” to some great wine discoveries...
and just look where this led us! The Land of OZ was never this much fun.

So here are seven wines – giving Pinot Noir – and the Southern Rhone, its original home, some competition!

GOT FOOD?

Versatile? Oh yes! Grenache is an awesome wine with so many foods. Sound like what you'd expect from a Pinot Noir, right? Well it is! Holiday foods of all sorts? Yes. Try duck, lamb, venison, wild mushrooms, cassoulet and stews, plus turkey and all the trimmings. Uh-huh!

THE WINES!

LISTED IN THE ORDER TASTED – TASTING REVIEWS FOLLOW

Wine A	■	2005	ELYSE	Le Corbeau	Napa Valley	\$44
Wine B	■	2005	MATHIS		Sonoma Valley	\$35
Wine C	■	2004	MENGUANTE		Carigñena, Spain	\$16
Wine D	■	2005	McDOWELL		McDowell Valley	\$25
Wine E	■	2006	BOKISCH VINEYARDS		Lodi	\$18
Wine F	■	2003	PIRRAMIMMA	Old Bush Vine	McLaren Vale, Australia	\$23
Wine G	■	2006	NOVY FAMILY	Judge Family vineyard	Bennett Valley	\$26

➤ The prices listed are winery suggested retail ◀

Each Tasting Panelist has selected their **Favorite (F)** and their **Value pick (V)** of this tasting. You'll find this noted with their individual summary comments.

“Breaking the code” ♦ Terms used in the reviews that follow

- Balance** ➤ Refers to Fruit, Acid and Tannin. When they are all perceivable in equal amounts and one doesn't appear to be excessive or lacking, the wine is in “balance”.
- Hot** ➤ Refers to percentage of alcohol. If the alcohol is noticeable, it's not in “balance” and makes the wine unpleasant or “hot”.

Every wine will have the following self-explanatory terms to describe the **FRUIT, ACID** and **TANNIN**

Ideal (or “just right”)

'Slightly' excessive or 'Slightly' lacking,

Excessive or Lacking (more than 'slightly')

'Very' excessive or 'Very' lacking (definitely too much or too little)

Over The Top (“OTT”) (self-explanatory)

ENJOY THE REVIEWS – ENJOY THE JOURNEY!



WINE "A"

2005 ELYSE Le Corbeau Hudson Vineyard \$44
Napa Valley 14.4 % alcohol

It seems like northern California wine country is a magnet for people who love wine and decide to follow their dream. Ray and his wife Nancy came west in 1983 so Ray could follow his dream of learning to make wine. The first Elyse wine, named after his daughter, was bottled in 1987, and the winery opened in 1997. Ray's philosophy is to make wines to sit down with and enjoy – wines to drink with food. The 372 cases of 2005 *Le Corbeau* ("The Raven") is 90% Grenache and 10% Syrah, and is aged for 22 months in French oak. A family owned winery, the wines are named after Ray and Nancy's children – Elyse and Jake.

PANEL EVALUATIONS AND COMMENTS

- Donna** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** All ideal and in balance / Medium body, Med-long finish
Dark fruits linger throughout, with spice on the finish.
- Cory** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** All ideal and in balance / Med-full body, Med-long finish **F**
This wine has a wonderful nose of roses and hints of clove. Nice balance and very food friendly. Tastes of dark fruits and spice through the finish. A little earthiness, too – a bit like a French wine.
- Debra** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** All ideal and in balance / Med-full body, Long finish **F**
Deep earth and crushed herb aroma and a nutty aftertaste. A great food pairing would be beef stew with fresh tomatoes, artichoke and green olives – the wine will stand up to it! I would buy it.
- James H** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** All ideal and in balance / Med-full body, Long finish **F**
Beautiful spicy, cedar aromas. Spicy, floral flavors and a long pleasant finish. Dense and flavorful. Good acidity for food. Loved it!
- Mary** **Fruit:** Slightly lacking **Acid and Tannin:** Slightly excessive / Med-full body, Long finish
The wine has a nice sweet floral nose that keeps changing as it opens up. The wine was pleasantly light, with soft tannins.
- Mark** **Fruit:** Ideal **Acid:** Slightly lacking / Medium body, Medium finish
A bright, bold spicy wine with an earthy base and a slightly tannic finish. Needs a big food to pair with – lamb shanks or beef. Will age for 3 – 5 years.
- Linda** **Fruit:** Slightly lacking **Acid and Tannin:** Slightly excessive / Medium body, Med-long finish
This wine was a little too dry for me but had some nice fruit.
- Bill** **Fruit and Acid:** Ideal and balanced / Full-bodied, Long finish **F, V**
Intense, complex nose. A balanced and flavorful wine. Excellent.
- Von** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** All ideal and in balance / Med-full body, Long finish **F**
Aromas of dark cherry and earth. A yummy wine that would go with all sorts of food. It's rich and the fruit lingers in a great finish. Soft tannins and good acidity for food – duck l'orange or roasted red pepper.....



WINE “B”

2005 MATHIS
Sonoma Valley

\$35
14.8% alcohol



Peter Mathis has been the head winemaker at Ravenswood since 1990. In 2004 he released his first wine under the new Mathis label. Peter has always been intrigued by wines from the Southern Rhone, and has a passion for Grenache in particular. The grapes come from his own vineyard in the hills above the town of Sonoma. This wine is a blend of 86% Grenache, 9% Carignane 4% Petite Sirah and 1% Alicante Bouchet. It spent 30 months in neutral French oak. Peter makes only 532 cases and expects it age well for 4 – 5 years.

PANEL EVALUATIONS AND COMMENTS

- Donna** **Fruit, and Acid:** Ideal **Tannin:** Slightly lacking / Medium body, Med-long finish
Great cherry and rose aromas. Soft mouthfeel, very drinkable and I liked the complexity. Would pair well with pork loin with a cherry sauce.
- Cory** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** All ideal and in balance / Med-full body, Med-long finish
A lovely black cherry nose and black cherry flavors. A tiny bit “hot” but not enough to overwhelm. Oak isn’t dominant and adds a dimension. A few years in the bottle (5 – 7) will be rewarded!
- Debra** **Fruit:** Ideal **Acid and Tannin:** Slightly excessive / Med-full body, Long finish
Aromas of light clove, anise, earth and spice. Would go with a variety of cheese. A “big” food wine – great fruit, well-balanced. Great wine to drink before dinner and with Thanksgiving dinner.
- James H** **Fruit:** Slightly lacking **Acid and Tannin:** Ideal / Med-full body, Long finish
Cedar, roses and spice aroma. A bit too hot and overripe, otherwise a spicy, floral and pleasant wine.
- Mary** **Fruit and Tannin:** Ideal **Acid:** Excessive / Med-full body, Med-long finish **F**
Nice nose of fruit and clove. The wine was fruity and a little hot. Nice tannins and the acidity would make it good with food like baked honey ham and mash potatoes. Nice finish, but hot. Reminded me of clove and cinnamon spices at Xmas.
- Mark** **Fruit:** Excessive **Acid:** Ideal **Tannin:** Slightly excessive / Med-full body, Long finish
Big nose of fruit and berries – earthy, but a little on the hot side. A big bold fruity wine with a wonderful silky mouthfeel. A nice long finish. Would be great with spicy beef kabobs.
- Linda** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** All ideal and in balance / Medium body, Med-long finish **F**
Berry-cherry aroas. This is a full, smooth cherries and berries wine. I could sip it or have it with food – pasta with marinara sauce. A nice wine! I’d buy it.
- Bill** **Fruit and Acid:** Ideal and balanced / Med-full-bodied, Long finish
Fruity nose of moderate intensity. A balanced, appealing dry wine that would go well with food.
- Von** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** All ideal and in balance / Med-full body, Med-long finish
Nice fruit aromas with strawberry and slight floral. Unfortunately it’s “hot”, and except for the hotness it would have been a lovely wine. It has elegance potential and the fruit lingers in the finish. Would be a good Thanksgiving wine.



WINE “C”

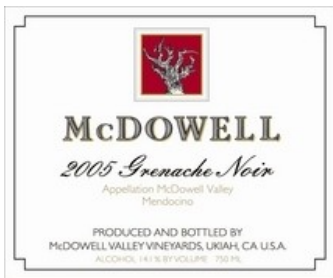
2004 MENGUANTE
Carigñena, Spain

\$16
14.0% alcohol

Founded in 1760, Vinedos Y Bodegas Pablo Menguante is a family-owned estate that is located in the heart of the kingdom of Aragon, Cariñena. They emphasize the use of indigenous varietals and biodynamic farming techniques, with the goal of capturing the intensity and essence of the vineyard. This Menguante Garnacha (Grenache) is produced from 80-year-old vines and has spent 8 months in nearly neutral French and American oak. It's been highly praised by wine critics in the United States. It's made in a style that can age for 6 – 8 years

PANEL EVALUATIONS AND COMMENTS

- Donna** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** All ideal and in balance / Medium body, Med-long finish
Aromas of dried cherry and a touch of smoke. A silky mouthfeel with dark fruits, spice and pepper on the finish. Very pleasant.
- Cory** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** All ideal and in balance / Med-full body, Medium finish
Aromas of red fruits, plus some floral notes and a hint of spice. The fruit is there, both in the nose and on the front palate, but then it fades a bit. Slight bitter on the finish. Can age 3 – 5 years.
- Debra** **Fruit:** Slightly excessive **Acid and Tannin:** Excessive / Med-full body, Med-long finish
Smoky aroma – and some alcohol. There are ripe fruit characteristics that linger into the finish and some very dry tannins.
- James H** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** All ideal and in balance / Med-full body, Med-long finish ✓
Cedar, mahogany and slight floral aroma. Very spicy and woody. Good tannins for age and acidity for food. A medium-long, clean finish. Basically a nice wine.
- Mary** **Fruit:** Slightly lacking **Acid and Tannin:** Slightly excessive / Med-full body, Long finish
Herbal, spicy nose. The spice and heat of this wine got in the way of the fruit for me. Had some nice complexity. It was an interesting wine that I'd like to let it sit and try again later.
- Mark** **Fruit and Acid:** Ideal **Tannin:** Excessive / Med-full body, Med-long finish
Nice fruit in the nose. A big wine with overpowering tannins. This wine isn't for the feint of heart. Needs to be paired with some big, powerful food like steak with Bearnaise and spicy gazpacho.
- Linda** **Fruit and Acid:** Ideal **Tannin:** Slightly lacking / Med-light body, Med-short finish
Pretty color. Herbal aroma with almond hints. A “glug-able” wine. Cranberry. I would have liked a longer finish.
- Bill** **Fruit and Acid:** Ideal and balanced / Full-bodied, Long finish
Fruity nose with good intensity. Consistent fruit in the nose. A well-balanced wine from the start to the medium finish. Would be a good wine with food.
- Von** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** All ideal and in balance / Med-full body, Med-long finish
Interesting Pinot-y nose with ripe fruit, spice, cloves and earth. This is a “big” wine with lots of flavor and lots of everything. Try with duck à l'orange, goose or other rich poultry – and pasta.



WINE "D"

2005 McDOWELL
McDowell Valley – Mendocino

\$25
14.1% alcohol

McDowell Valley Vineyards, established in 1970, is home to some of the oldest Syrah vines in the United States, dating back to 1919. The vineyard has one of the longest records of continuous wine grape production in California, and Syrah and Grenache have been planted on this soil for almost a century. Today, nearly a third are Rhône varietals are grapes from those original vineyards, which were replanted in 1948 using the same genetic material. This wine is a blend of 94% Grenache Noir and 6% Syrah and was barrel-aged in 3-year old French oak for 8 months. Only 300 cases were produced.

PANEL EVALUATIONS AND COMMENTS

- Donna** **Fruit:** Ideal **Acid and Tannin:** Slightly excessive / Med-full body, Med-long finish
That wonderful Grenache fruit and floral character, both on the nose and the taste. Spice, pepper and clove on the finish.
- Cory** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** All ideal and in balance / Med-full body, Med-long finish
Rose petals, cinnamon, and a hint of bay on the nose. I really like this wine. Lots of personality, beautiful nose, great balance, very drinkable with or without food. Pair with butternut squash soup!
- Debra** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** Slightly excessive / Medium body, Long finish
Smoke, spice and cured meats on the nose. The nose wants to make me have a lot of this wine! Juicy on the palate, then a long, tart, dry finish. Good aging potential – up to 8 years
- James H** **Fruit:** Slightly lacking **Acid and Tannin:** Ideal / Medium body, Med-long finish
Smoky, toasty, floral nose – and alcohol. Sadly the hotness from the alcohol burned out the fruit. Finish was seductive but left a burning sensation. Would be a very nice wine with lower alcohol.
- Mary** **Fruit and Tannin:** Ideal **Acid:** Excessive / Medium body, Med-long finish
Spicy, floral, fruity aromas. This was hot but I still enjoyed it. The acidity would make it great with food – maybe Spanish Tapas, or a spinach / cheese / mushroom Quiche.
- Mark** **Fruit and Acid:** Slightly excessive **Tannin:** Excessive / Med-full body, Medium finish
Aromas of bright fruit, with pepper and spice. The fruit and earthy spice is overpowered by the hot alcohol and the big tannins. Pair with a gamey meat like a spicy duck confit. Can age 5 -9 years.
- Linda** **Fruit and Tannin:** Ideal **Acid:** Slightly excessive / Med-full body, Long finish ✓
Very creamy, full wine. I enjoyed the taste and the finish. Might be hot, but it was forgivable. I would buy this wine.
- Bill** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** All ideal and in balance / Med-full body, Med-long finish
Aromas of fruit and spice. A full-bodied wine with distinctive fruit and spice. Acidity comes out in the finish.
- Von** **Fruit:** Slightly lacking **Acid and Tannin:** Slightly excessive / Medium body, Med-long finish
Nice nose of fruit, spice and a hint of floral. More of an "old world" style wine. Had some nice fruit flavors and I would have liked it a lot more with less alcohol. This should go nicely with creamy sauces and cheeses like Cambazola Bleu to soften the hotness.

WINE “E”



2006 BOKISCH VINEYARDS
Clements Hills – Lodi

Sueño Vineyard Garnacha

\$18
14.5% alcohol

Between Markus Bokisch's family ties to Spain, and Liz and Markus' love of Spain, it was only natural that they would fall in love with Spanish wines. They specialize in four Spanish varieties – with a California touch, and stunning label artwork. Their respect for the land borders on passion – using sustainable vineyard practices, and irrigating by solar energy. Made from 100% Garnacha (“Grenache” in France), this wine spent 7 months in new and neutral French oak barrels. Only 291 cases were produced.

PANEL EVALUATIONS AND COMMENTS

- Donna** **Fruit:** Ideal **Acid and Tannin:** Slightly excessive / Medium body, Med-long finish
Aromas of cherries, candied fruit and cream soda! The flavors follow where the nose leads and finishes with spice. Try this with meat loaf, pork, or a medium-rare steak.
- Cory** **Fruit:** Slightly lacking **Acid and Tannin:** Slightly excessive / Medium body, Medium finish
Unfortunately, the alcohol overwhelms the rest of the experience – the fruit and other more subtle characteristics of the wine.
- Debra** **Fruit:** Slightly excessive **Acid and Tannin:** Excessive / Medium body, Medium finish
Ripe cherries, spice and pepper on the nose. This wine makes my mouth water. Very juicy, ripe fruit with a cranberry finish. Try with a fresh tomato Lasagne. Will age for 5 – 6 years.
- James H** **Fruit:** Slightly excessive **Acid:** Slightly lacking **Tannin:** Ideal / Medium body, Med-long finish
Aromas of roses and cedar. Very ripe fruit flavors but light on acidity and also a little too hot.
- Mary** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** All slightly lacking / Med-full body, Med-long finish
Fruit and herbal aromas. This is a big wine with lots of great flavor – though for me the heat of the alcohol interfered with the fruit.
- Mark** **Fruit and Tannin:** Ideal **Acid:** Slightly excessive / Medium body, Med-long finish
A nicely balanced lighter red with a hint of hibiscus flower. A little hot, but good for a fall afternoon the porch with wine and cheese and good friends.
- Linda** **Fruit:** Excessive **Acid and Tannin:** Ideal / Medium body, Medium finish
Very pleasant aromas. Both flavors and aromas of very ripe fruit – prunes and raisins. Also noticeably hot.
- Bill** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** All ideal and in balance / Medium body, Medium finish
Moderately intense fruit and spice in the nose. Mostly balanced but acidity and tannins predominated in the wine.
- Von** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** All ideal and in balance / Med-full body, Med-long finish
Aromas of ripe fruit, pomegranate and cloves – and alcohol.... Another wine that would have been delightful with lower alcohol levels. Otherwise, it was a mouthful of prunes, ribbon candy and spice – and the fruit continued on into the finish.

WINE "F"



2003 PIRRAMIMMA Old Bush Vine Grenache
McLaren Vale – Australia

\$23
14.0% alcohol

The Johnston family arrived in South Australia in 1839 and in 1892 Alexander, the tenth of thirteen children, purchased 97 hectares of rich farmland southeast of the then fledgling village of McLaren Vale. He named his land Pirramimma, an Aboriginal phrase meaning "the moon and the stars", and the Johnston family has owned and operated the winery ever since, making it a family affair for well over 100 years. This 100% Grenache comes from the oldest vineyard on the Estate, planted in 1944 and dry farmed and has spent a minimum of 24 months in American oak.

PANEL EVALUATIONS AND COMMENTS

Donna **Fruit:** Ideal **Acid:** Slightly excessive / Med-full body, Med-long finish **F, V**

Rose and cherry aromas with just a hint of clean pine. Nice. It's like drinking flowers without a perfumy taste and smell. I like this wine – seems I've discovered I really like Grenache!

Cory **Fruit and Acid:** Ideal **Tannin:** Slightly excessive / Medi-full body, Medium finish **V**
Aromas of dark red fruit and spice. A big wine with big fruit. A little hot, but not a fatal flaw. A very nice wine, and if you can lay it down to age for a few years you'll be well rewarded.

Debra **Fruit:** Ideal **Acid and Tannin:** Excessive / Medium body, Medium finish **V**
Light vanilla and a bit hot on the nose. A young wine with very good aging potential. It should age 3 – 8 years to soften.

James H **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** All ideal and in balance / Med-full body, Long finish
Stunning nose of incense, pine forest and spice! Flavors of cherries and spice with good acidity. Good aging potential – I'd say a good 5 years.

Mary **Fruit and Tannin:** Ideal **Acid:** Slightly excessive / Medium body, Med-long finish
Fruity, spicy aromas. Pinot-like – spicy, flavorful and fruity. Just a very little hot, and the higher acidity would probably make it good with a spicy dish – Lamb perhaps, with a creamy curry sauce?

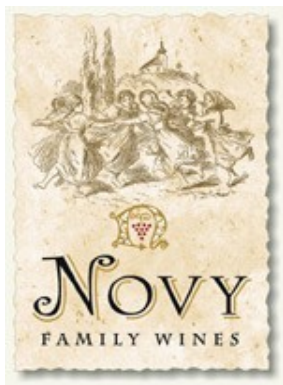
Mark **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** All ideal and in balance / Med-full body, Med-long finish **F, V**
A delightful, balanced wine that starts with very nice fruit in the nose and ends with a lingering, velvety finish. This would pair well with a medium-spiced Spanish Paella. Could age 4 – 7 years.

Linda **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** All ideal and in balance / Medium body, Long finish
Lots of smoky aromas. I like it. The more I drank, the more I like it. I particularly liked the finish and would definitely buy this wine.

Bill **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** All ideal and in balance / Medium body, Medium finish
Interesting fresh fruit aromas with some spice. Acidity becomes more apparent in the finish.

Von **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** All ideal and in balance / Medium body, Med-long finish **V**
Delicious complex aromas of bright red fruit – cherry, strawberry – and spice. A yummy wine overall – with or without food! Soft, with great balance and flavors. Perfect for the holidays – a go with everything wine – I love it!

WINE “G”



2006 NOVY FAMILY WINES **Judge Family Vineyard** \$26
Bennett Valley 14.5% alcohol

Novy Cellars is a family winery, owned by Adam & Dianna Lee (of Siduri Wines) and Dianna's family. Tracing their family history back to Czechoslovakia. The Novy family takes pride in their Czech heritage and took the name of the winery – Novy – from the Czech word meaning “new.” The Bennett Valley is the newest AVA and is also one of the coolest. This wine is a blend of 89% Grenache and 11% Syrah. It aged for 17 months in barrel and only 4 of the 9 barrels made the cut for the final blend and were bottled, making this a very small production of just under 100 cases.

PANEL EVALUATIONS AND COMMENTS

- Donna** **Fruit:** Ideal **Acid and Tannin:** Slightly excessive / Med-full body, Medium finish
Wonderful nose of dried and candied fruit and herbs. Tannins could soften more from decanting. There's spice, clove and pepper on the finish. Would go well with pizza.
- Cory** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** All ideal and in balance / Medium body, Medium finish
Floral aromas with a hint of caramel and spice. This is a well-balanced wine with good fruit all the way through. A bit hot on the finish, though overall I liked it.
- Debra** **Fruit:** Ideal **Acid and Tannin:** Slightly excessive / Medium body, Med-long finish
Light smoke, white pepper and coffee on the nose. A young wine that could easily lay down for 5 years. Cranberry and tea on the finish, and it's also just a little hot on th finish as well.
- James H** **Fruit and Tannin:** Ideal **Acid:** Slightly lacking / Med-full body, Med-long finish
Nice spicy, woody nose but noticeable alcohol. Pleasantly toasty flavors, but again the delicacy was killed by the alcohol.
- Mary** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** All ideal and in balance / Medium body, Med-long finish ✓
A nice wine – very fruity, balanced with spice, oak and bursting with flavor. A nice sipping wine. I'd like to try it at Thanksgiving with sweet potatoes and pomegranate. A little hot, but I'll forgive it.
- Mark** **Fruit and Tannin:** Slightly excessive **Acid:** Ideal / Med-full body, Med-long finish
A full-bodied red with big, earthy spice of clove and pepper. A velvety mouthfeel that slides in into a tannic, cranberry finish. Lower alcohol would really suit this wine. Can age for 5 – 10 years.
- Linda** **Fruit:** Lacking **Acid and Tannin:** Excessive / Medium body, Med-long finish
Nice ripe fruit but some bitter in the finish. Liquor-ish (hot). Needs food.
- Bill** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** All ideal and in balance / Med-full body, Med-long finish
Complex fruity aromas. A well-balanced wine with agreeable tannin that contributed to a nicely balanced wine with a long finish. Good wine for food.
- Von** **Fruit and Tannin:** Slightly excessive **Acid:** Ideal / Medium body, Med-long finish
Oh, if only this wine had been made with lower alcohol. The aromas were lovely – pomegranate, dark cherry, ripe fruit – and alcohol. There were very nice ripe fruit flavors that had to battle the hotness and kept trying to do so throughout the finish.

AND FINALLY...

A VERY SPECIAL, AND ONGOING THANK YOU TO...

Linda and *Donna*, the delightful owners of **PELICAN ART GALLERY** in Petaluma who continue to so graciously offer their beautiful gallery for our tastings. We're surrounded by beautiful art while tasting exciting wines. Life is good.

Incidentally, it turns out that Linda has an impressive palate for evaluating wines and has become an indispensable member of the panel!

**SEE YOU NEXT MONTH FOR MORE
WINES TO EXPLORE,
MORE WINES TO ENJOY!**

