

OCTOBER 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 ◀

RHONES RULE!

It's that time of year again. You know – the time of great wine indecision.

Well, we had Holiday food, fun and adventure on our minds when we tasted and reviewed the **RHÔNE BLENDS** that follow. *Grenache, Syrah, Mourvèdre, Petite Sirah, Cinsaut, and Carignane* – they have it all! So think of this as your first gift of the season. Something special for you and your friends – to give and enjoy.

GOT FOOD?

Oh my, what foods *don't* these wines go with? Try them with just about everything! Autumn foods of all sorts. Stews, soups, roast veggies, potatoes of all colors, butternut squash, steak, poultry, lamb, pork, pastas. They're amazingly versatile and refreshingly affordable. Now *that's* a gift!

THE WINES!

LISTED IN THE ORDER TASTED – TASTING REVIEWS FOLLOW

Wine A	■	2006	LA FERME JULIEN	Côtes du Ventoux	France	\$5
Wine B	■	2007	CLINE CELLARS	Cashmere	California	\$21
Wine C	■	2005	SHELDON WINERY	Vinolocity	Santa Ynez Valley	\$30
Wine D	■	2005	ARROWOOD	Cote de Lune Rouge	Sonoma Valley	\$30
Wine E	■	2005	FIFE VINEYARDS	L'Attitude 39	Mendocino	\$18.50
Wine F	■	2005	FÉRAUD-BRUNEL	Côtes du RhoneVillages	France	\$12
Wine G	■	2006	LA CABOTTE	Cote du Rhone	France	\$10
Wine H	■	2005	TWISTED OAK	*%#&@!	Calaveras County	\$24

➤ When possible, prices listed are winery suggested retail ◀

No **Favorite** or **Value** picks this month – these wines all stood on their own uniqueness.

“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"



2006 LA FERME JULIEN
France

Côtes du Ventoux

\$5
13.5 % alcohol

Since It's not always easy to get background information on wines that don't come from a large or well-known European wine producer, I was thrilled to find winemaker comments on this one. This wine comes from vines grown on the slopes of Mount-Ventoux in the Rhone Valley of France and has been blended by the well-known Perrin family. This is a traditional Rhône wine blend of 50% Grenache, 20% Syrah, 15% Carignan and 15% Cinsault. The price to quality ratio makes this a good everyday dinner wine.

PANEL EVALUATIONS AND COMMENTS

- Donna** **Fruit:** Ideal **Acid and Tannin:** Slightly excessive / Med-light body, Med-long finish
Very likable aromas – blackberry, raisin and cedar notes. Soft, very pleasant mouthfeel. Pepper and spice on the finish.
- Cory** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** Ideal and in balance / Med-full body, Med-long finish
Aromas of black cherry with a hint of black pepper. The fruit, nose and mouthfeel are all attractive, conjuring up a beef Bourgoigne, but there's a little bitterness on the finish.
- James H** **Fruit and Acid:** Ideal and balanced **Tannin:** slightly lacking / Med-light body, Medium finish
Earthy, smoky aromas. Very nice wine. Nicely balanced, low tannin, drink-now wine with dark blackberry and chocolate flavors.
- Mary** **Fruit and Tannin:** Slightly lacking **Acid:** Ideal / Med-light body, Med-short finish
A light, well balanced, spicy wine with dusty berry aromas. I enjoyed it. I thought of butternut squash raviolis with walnut crème sauce.
- Jim A** **Fruit:** Slightly lacking **Acid and Tannin:** Slightly excessive / Med-full body, Med-long finish
This seems like a French wine to me – low on fruit and with a particular earthiness. Not my favorite style.
- Rob** **Fruit and Tannin:** Slightly excessive **Acid:** Ideal / Med-full bodied, Med-long finish
This is a nice wine. Fruity, but not overripe nose – a bit of dusty cocoa powder. It would stand alone or pair well with a large variety of foods. I'm thinking pork tenderloin – maybe with figs.
- Linda** **Fruit:** Slightly lacking **Acid:** Ideal **Tannin:** Slightly excessive / Medium body, Med-short finish
Yummy, complex nose. As a red wine lover, this wine fits my taste. It's hearty, with cranberry overtones. Finish could be longer. I'd buy it.
- Bill** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** Ideal and balanced / Medium body, Medium finish
Some spice in the nose. A medium bodied, balanced good every day wine that could age up to two years.
- Von** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** Ideal and balanced / Med-full body, Med-long finish
Basically a very enjoyable wine. A nose of ripe fruit with a hint of violets. Good sipping wine, and I could see this with lightly flavored and smoked dishes. Ripe fruit, nice finish. I liked it.



WINE "B"

2007 CLINE CELLARS
California

Cashmere

\$21
14.5% alcohol

Fred Cline comes from good Italian stock and learned to love the vineyards and wines he became familiar with as a child. Cline was one of the early pioneers of planting Rhone varietals and the winery bottles an impressive selection of them separately, as well as blending others in the European tradition. "Cashmere" is a blend of 39% Grenache, 38% Syrah and 23% Mourvèdre, barrel aged for 9 months in French oak. The Mourvèdre and Grenache come from family vineyards in Contra Costa, while the Syrah is grown primarily in Lake County.

PANEL EVALUATIONS AND COMMENTS

- Donna** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** Ideal and balanced / Medium body, Medium finish
Delicate floral aromas followed by strawberry. Soft, smooth mouthfeel – an easy quaff – red fruit, berries, a little chocolate and spice on finish. Good with mild cheese, roast chicken and veggies.
- Cory** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** Ideal and balanced / Med-full body, Med-long finish
Aromas of dark cherry, plum, white pepper and vanilla. Nice mouthfeel with red fruit, pepper and vanilla. A little "hot" on the finish, but acceptable.
- James H** **Fruit:** slightly excessive **Acid and Tannin:** slightly lacking / Medium body, Medium finish
Earthy, smoky, peppery aromas – and alcohol. Alcohol dominates and gives the sensation of sweetness. Between the high alcohol and low acidity, this is not a food-friendly wine.
- Mary** **Fruit and Acid:** Ideal **Tannin:** Slightly lacking / Med-full body, Med-long finish
Fruity, plummy flavorful but higher alcohol wine. I enjoyed it but I think it craves food – something like beef in a wine reduction sauce.
- Jim A** **Fruit:** Slightly lacking **Acid and Tannin:** Slightly excessive / Medium body, Med-long finish
A soft, round wine with a long, hot, peppery finish, which is what you'll remember when the initial soft roundness is gone. Not a bad flavor, but it's almost drowned out by the alcohol.
- Rob** **Fruit and Tannin:** Slightly excessive **Acid:** Slightly lacking / Medium body, Med-long finish
Earthy, dark fruit aromas. Flavors of plums and Roma apples – and a bit hot, but it still keeps me coming back. I thought of turkey with apple stuffing and sage.
- Linda** **Fruit and Tannin:** Ideal **Acid:** Slightly excessive / Med-full body, Long finish
A nice wine with smoky aromas and a long finish. My impression was that the fruit stayed on the vine a little long leading to flavors of smoke and raisin.
- Bill** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** Ideal and balanced / Med-full body, Medium finish
Aromas of fruit, spice and vanilla initially carried through to the flavors. Then the alcohol came out, and masked the good balance and other qualities of this wine.
- Von** **Fruit:** Slightly excessive **Acid and Tannin:** Slightly lacking / Med-full body, Med-long finish
Nice nose – bright red fruit, some earthiness, but also some heat. The wine was very flavorful with very ripe fruit character – prunes, figs and raisins. Alcohol came through in the finish, though the fruit still persisted. I could see this with sweet-sour sauces.

WINE “C”



2005 SHELDON WINERY
Santa Ynez Valley

Vinolocity

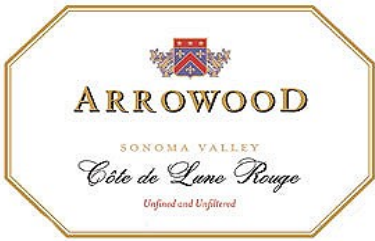
\$30
14.8% alcohol

Another winery with a sense of humor. Seeing their website picture and reading their story makes you want to meet them. Making only 1000 cases total, they describe themselves as a “Micro-Winery”. Their winemaking philosophy: “Get the best fruit possible, and don't screw it up!” The fruit for this wine comes from a single vineyard in the Santa Ynez Valley. After spending 14 months in oak, this blend of 82% Grenache and 18% Syrah was bottled as “Vinolocity”, a pseudo physics term they created to measure the “yummy” factor of wine.

PANEL EVALUATIONS AND COMMENTS

- Donna** **Fruit and Tannin:** Slightly excessive **Acid:** Ideal / Med-full body, Med-long finish
Floral, fruity nose. First impression was one of dark fruit and berry and a soft, round mouthfeel, but then the heat of the alcohol became obvious. Needs food to tame it – a steak perhaps.
- Cory** **Fruit:** Excessive **Acid:** Slightly lacking **Tannin:** Ideal / Medium body, Medium finish
Lots of oak on the nose. Perhaps this needs time in the bottle, but I think it has too much fruit, too much alcohol, and too much wood.
- James H** **Fruit:** Slightly excessive **Acid and Tannin:** Ideal / Medium body, Med-long finish
Beautiful woody, spicy nose – cedar, mahogany, spicy clove. Nice fruit, but sadly the alcohol dominates. This would be a spectacular wine if it weren't so hot.
- Mary** **Fruit:** Slightly excessive **Acid and Tannin:** Slightly lacking / Med-light body, Med-short finish
Cedar aroma. A very fruity wine though a little high in alcohol, which gets in the way of the fruit. I'd like to see this wine with food.
- Jim A** **Fruit:** Slightly excessive **Acid and Tannin:** Ideal / Med-light body, Med-long finish
Somewhat dry but light and sippable. Grenache-like wine that should be good with fowl I expect. A very likable light, bright, delight!
- Rob** **Fruit:** Slightly excessive **Acid and Tannin:** Slightly lacking / Med-light bodied, Med-short finish
A very different wine that seemed to have some ripe tropical aromas. Not sure how to describe it.
- Linda** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** Slightly lacking / Med-light body, Medium finish
Describing this is a bit of a challenge For me it had a combination of tart and Marzipan.
- Bill** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** Ideal and balanced / Medium body, Medium finish
A very interesting combination of fruitiness and citrus. A well balanced wine.
- Von** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** Ideal and balanced / Medium body, Med-long finish
Aromas of tart, red berries, red currant, cranberry and cedar. A little high on alcohol, but will flavors of tart fruit and good acidity. A nice basically pleasant wine that called for food – rustic stews, big flavorful sauces.

WINE “D”



2005 ARROWOOD
Sonoma Valley

Côte du Lune Rouge

\$30
15.0% alcohol

You've no doubt heard of Richard Arrowood, one of the most highly regarded winemakers in Sonoma Country who has been making wine for more than 40 years and created Chateau St. Jean's famous Chardonnay. In 1986, he and his wife opened Arrowood winery in Sonoma Valley. Patterned after many of the best wines produced in the Southern Rhône Valley, this one is a blend – consisting of 40% Syrah, 35% Mourvedre, and 25% Grenache Noir and was aged for 16 months in French oak barrels before being bottled unfined and unfiltered.

PANEL EVALUATIONS AND COMMENTS

- Donna** **Fruit and Acid:** Ideal **Tannin:** Slightly excessive / Medium body, Medium finish
Pleasantly fruity, woody aromas. A soft, wine with hints of toffee and caramel from the oak. A bit hot but should go well with grilled meats
- Cory** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** Ideal and balanced / Med-full body, Med-long finish
This is a lovely Rhone blend – a very nice example of the blend -- fruit forward, but well balanced, with a nice long finish and aging potential of 3 – 5 years.
- James H** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** Ideal and balanced / Medium body, Med-long finish
Nice aromas of cedar, tar and spice. Lots of body and character – spice and dark berry flavors. Noticeable alcohol at the upper limit of acceptable. Pleasantly long finish.
- Mary** **Fruit and Acid:** Slightly lacking **Tannin:** Ideal / Medium body, Med-long finish
Lots of nice fruit aromas. Also plenty of tannins and noticeable alcohol. I would have liked more fruit as a balance to the tannins and high alcohol.
- Jim A** **Fruit:** Ideal **Acid and Tannin:** Slightly excessive / Med-full body, Med-long finish
An earthy, somewhat hot wine that should go well with flavorful foods.
- Rob** **Fruit and Tannin:** Slightly excessive **Acid:** Slightly lacking / Med-full body, Medium finish
Delightful aromas of dark berries and tobacco. The first impression is one of very slight sweetness though the wine is dry. Could be the alcohol. Perhaps some nice pungent cheeses?
- Linda** **Fruit:** Slightly lacking **Acid and Tannin:** Slightly excessive / Medium body, Medium finish
Fresh cherry aroma. The nose suggested more fruit than I found in the taste.
- Bill** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** Ideal and balanced / Med-full body, Med-long finish
A very interesting and complex nose with soft oak. A balanced wine, with noticeable alcohol but might still work with food.
- Von** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** Ideal and balanced / Med-full body, Med-long finish
A delightful and intriguing nose – smoke and fruit plus some chocolate and spice. A complex wine with a silky mouthfeel and good balance. Some noticeable alcohol, but his wine handled it well, making it a pleasant wine to sip or have with food.

WINE “E”



2005 FIFE VINEYARDS
Mendocino

L'Attitude 39

\$18.50
14.2% alcohol

It seems like most people in the wine business have a dream of eventually having their own winery, and making their own wine. Dennis Fife realized that dream and launched Fife Vineyards in 1991. The grapes for this wine come from the slopes in Ukiah and Redwood Valleys (latitude 39°). This is a southern Rhône style blend of 38% Grenache Noir, 36% Syrah, 19% Carignane and 7% Petite Sirah which spent 14 months in barrel. Dennis' winemaking philosophy is European – minimal intervention, with the focus on blending to make the best wine.

PANEL EVALUATIONS AND COMMENTS

- Donna** **Fruit and Acid:** Ideal **Tannin:** Slightly excessive / Med-full body, Med-long finish
Lots of things happening in this wine. I get dark fruit, eucalyptus, mint and cocoa. The mouthfeel is soft and round.
- Cory** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** Ideal and balanced / Medium body, Med-long finish
A deep garnet color and a beautiful nose of dark cherry with a touch of vanilla and some spice. Well[balanced and a wonderfully long finish that carries all the flavors to the end. Thumbs up!
- James H** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** Ideal and balanced / Medium body, Med-long finish
Huge! Aromas of cedar, rose and vanilla. Great balance and alcohol is not noticeable! Blackberry cobbler (berry and spice) flavors. Has aging potential and is very food friendly.
- Mary** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** Ideal and balanced / Med-full body, Med-long finish
I really liked this wine. It had a creamy texture and was good all the way from the color, to the cedar / redwood nose, through the tannins in the finish.
- Jim A** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** Ideal and balanced / Med-full body, Med-long finish
Really nice, deep, rich and complex. An interesting and well-balanced wine and would be great paired with subtle cheeses.
- Rob** **Fruit and Acid:** Slightly lacking **Tannin:** Slightly excessive / Med-full body, Med-long finish
Lots of toasty baking spices, cedar and dark berries. A little light on fruit for my taste, but it keeps me coming back for another sip.
- Linda** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** Ideal and balanced / Medium body, Med-long finish
Aromas full of spice and fruit. Balanced and drinkable. Good finish with hints of pencil shavings and smoke, with fruits and spices. Nice wine – I'd definitely buy it.
- Bill** *Did not comment on this wine.*
- Von** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** Ideal and balanced / Medium body, Med-long finish
A lovely nose of fresh red fruit with cedar and a hint of floral. It suggests holiday foods! A good all-arounding food wine, particularly Italian, and winter fare. A very enjoyable wine!

WINE "F"



2005 FÉRAUD-BRUNEL
France

Côtes du Rhone Villages

\$12
13.5% alcohol

This wine is produced by a partnership of two well-known winemakers and negociants in the Châteauneuf-du-Pape region of France who also produce their own wines separately. The varietals are fermented and aged separately, then brought together to be blended unfiltered and unfiltered. This particular blend is made from 75% Grenache, 20% Syrah and 5% other varietals (Mourvedre, Cinsault and Carignane). It's received high praise from a well-known wine critic, being called a brilliant wine from a sleeper of a vintage.

PANEL EVALUATIONS AND COMMENTS

Donna *Did not comment on this wine.*

Cory **Fruit and Tannin:** Ideal **Acid:** Excessive / Medium body, Medium finish
This wine caught y attention with its nose, then seemed to fade. Then the acidity came through and overwhelmed the rest of the flavors. Too acidic for me.

James H **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** Ideal and balanced / Medium body, Med-long finish
Spice, cedar and floral aromas with perhaps a little "bret". Lighter flavors – superb balance.

Mary *Did not comment on this wine.*

Jim A *Did not comment on this wine.*

Rob **Fruit:** Slightly excessive **Acid:** Ideal **Tannin:** Excessive / Med-full body, Med-long finish
This wine has that "old world" aroma of wood and damp earth. It's a very dry, somewhat tannic wine and would definitely benefit from food.

Linda **Fruit:** Slightly lacking **Acid and Tannin:** Excessive / Medium body, Med-long finish
Spicy, earthy aromas. For me there was too much tannin and not enough fruit. Might buy it.

Bill *Did not comment on this wine.*

Von **Fruit:** Ideal **Acid and Tannin:** Slightly excessive / Medium body, Med-long finish
Aromas of red fruit and wine cellar. The fruit comes through amidst the crisp acidity. This would be a good food wine paired with high acid foods like tomatoes – think Italian.

WINE "G"



2006 LA CABOTTE
France

Côtes du Rhone

\$10
14.0% alcohol

The grapes for this wine are grown right in the heart of the Cotes du Rhone-Villages appellation and are grown in chalky, limestone soils that are covered with stones that retain the sun's warmth and keep the vines warm at night. Named after the Burgundian founder of the estate, Gabriel D' Ardhuys, the wine is aged in Burgundian barrels. This is an estate-bottled wine made from a blend of Rhone varietals – 65% Grenache, 25% Syrah, 5% Cinsault and 5% Carignane. The vineyard has been Biodynamic since 2007.

PANEL EVALUATIONS AND COMMENTS

Donna *Did not comment on this wine.*

Cory **Fruit:** Ideal **Acid:** Excessive
Subtle, faint aromas. This wine was way too hot! The alcohol imbalance overwhelms everything else in this wine.

James H **Fruit and Acid:** Ideal **Tannin:** Slightly lacking / Medium body, Medium finish
Some spice and wood in the nose, but much diluted by the alcohol. Hot on the tongue and n the finish. What a shame.

Mary **Fruit:** Ideal **Acid and Tannin:** Slightly excessive / Medium body, Med-long finish
Nice nose with herbs and oak. Though a very astringent wine (tannic), there was a sweetness.... This wine is high n tannins and acid. It think it be good with food – perhaps pasta.

Jim A **Fruit:** Slightly excessive **Acid and Tannin:** Slightly lacking
A simple wine – not bad in its simplicity, but would be helped by some food.

Rob **Fruit:** Ideal **Acid and Tannin:** Slightly excessive / Medium body, Med-short finish
Very soft aromas – some spice and little fruit. A light, subtle wine. Serve with foods that are not too spicy or game-y. Should be nice with a light fish, such as Tilapia.

Linda **Fruit and Tannin:** Slightly lacking **Acid:** Slightly excessive / Medium body, Med-long finish
A rich, fruity nose. I liked the flavor and would probably buy this wine.

Bill *Did not comment on this wine.*

Von **Fruit:** Slightly excessive **Acid:** Slightly lacking **Tannin:** Ideal / Medium body, Med-long finish
Some red fruit aromas, then the alcohol creeps in. A basically simple, light wine with pleasant fruit and a nice finish that gets overpowered by the alcohol.

WINE "H"



2005 TWISTED OAK
Calaveras County

*%#&@!

\$24
14.1% alcohol

As you've no doubt guessed from the name of this wine, this is not your "typical" winery. Though the winery is actually named for a 300 + year-old California Blue Oak, the amount of "twisted" humor in their website alone leaves no doubt that there's a good healthy blend of refreshing irreverence coupled with some decidedly serious winemaking. The winery and vineyards are located in Calaveras County, in the Sierras and the blend of 51% Mourvèdre, 33% Syrah and 16% Grenache spent 11 months in barrels before being bottled.

PANEL EVALUATIONS AND COMMENTS

- Donna** **Fruit and Acid:** Ideal **Tannin:** Slightly excessive / Medium body, Medium finish
Floral, dark fruit and raisin aromas – then alcohol. It would like this better if it was not so hot. The alcohol overpowered it.
- Cory** **Fruit and Acid:** Ideal **Tannin:** Slightly excessive / Med-full body, Medium finish
A nice depth of red fruit on the nose. This very fruity wine could use 3 – 5 years in the bottle for the wine to live up to the aromas and the tannins to settle down.
- James H** **Fruit:** Excessive **Acid:** Slightly lacking **Tannin:** Ideal / Medium body, Medium finish
What started out with ripe fruit and floral aromas, became overpowered by alcohol. This would be a really nice wine with lower alcohol.
- Mary** **Fruit and Acid:** Ideal **Tannin:** Excessive / Med-full body, Med-long finish
Smoky wood plum, berry and floral aromas. A nice wine – fruity but not sweet. The flavor makes you forgive the high alcohol.
- Jim A** **Fruit:** Ideal **Acid and Tannin:** Slightly lacking / Med-full body, Med-long finish
A good red for a party – sweet, hot and fruity.
- Rob** **Fruit:** Ideal **Acid and Tannin:** Slightly excessive / Medium body, Med-long finish
Aromas of blackberries and nutmeg. This is a nice wine and could go with a lot of different foods like Butternut Squash soup with nutmeg and a dollop of crème fraiche, plus cheeses and meats.
- Linda** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** Ideal and balanced / Medium body, Med-long finish
I like this wine. It has a nice long finish and though the fruit is ripe, it's rich and flavorful. I'd buy this wine.
- Bill** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** Ideal and balanced / Med-full body, Med-long finish
Floral and spice aromas. An excellent wine – well-balanced and complex with a silky mouthfeel. The finish carries through all the good qualities of the wine. I would buy it for friends – and food.
- Von** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** Ideal and balanced / Medium body, Med-long finish
Seductive aromas of ripe fruit with floral notes. A lovely wine for sipping or with food. A little hot, though the wine handles it well. The fruit lingers through the soft acidity. Very pleasant.

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!**

