



Robert M. Parker, Jr.'s

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The WINE ADVOCATE®

The Independent Consumer's Bimonthly Guide to Fine Wine

RATING SYSTEM

Robert Parker's rating system employs a 50-100 point quality scale. It is my belief that the various twenty (20) point rating systems do not provide enough flexibility and often result in compressed and inflated wine ratings. THE WINE ADVOCATE takes a hard, very critical look at wine, since I would prefer to underestimate the wine's quality than to overestimate it. The numerical ratings are utilized only to enhance and complement the thorough tasting notes, which are my primary means of communicating my judgments to you.

96-100

An **extraordinary** wine of profound and complex character displaying all the attributes expected of a classic wine of its variety. Wines of this caliber are worth a special effort to find, purchase, and consume.

90-95

An **outstanding** wine of exceptional complexity and character. In short, these are terrific wines.

80-89

A **barely above average to very good** wine displaying various degrees of finesse and flavor as well as character with no noticeable flaws.

RECOMMENDED NEW RELEASES: SANTA BARBARA & the CENTRAL COAST

(The primary focus is Pinot Noir and Chardonnay)

SEASMOKE CELLARS 2001 PINOT NOIR BOTELLA

SANTA RITA HILLS (\$25.00)

RED 89+

SEASMOKE CELLARS 2001 PINOT NOIR SOUTHING

SANTA RITA HILLS (\$45.00)

RED 90+

One of the new, promising operations emerging from the cool climate vineyards of Santa Rita Hills, both of these offerings are distinctive, pretty Pinots exhibiting considerable potential. The **2001 Pinot Noir Botella** possesses a saturated ruby/purple color as well as delicate floral, red cherry, and pomegranate aromas, medium body, firm tannin, good acidity, and outstanding purity. However, it is still playing it close to the vest, so 6-12 more months of bottle age is recommended. Drink it over the following

6-7 years. Made in a completely different style, the dense ruby/purple-colored **2001 Pinot Noir Southing** reveals high acidity, but vivid aromatics as well as undeniable freshness and liveliness. Accompanying the lofty acids are equally high levels of sweet red and black fruits interwoven with earth and floral notes. Long on the palate, it just hints at its overall potential. Although 12-18 months of bottle age are warranted, this 2001 appears capable of lasting 6-8 years. Tel. (805) 737-1600

recognize, and there are benchmark wines against which others can be judged. I know of no one with three or four different glasses of wine in front of him or her, regardless of how good or bad the wines might be, who cannot say, "I prefer this one to that one." Scoring wines is simply taking a professional's opinion and applying some sort of numerical system to it on a consistent basis. Scoring permits rapid communication of information to expert and novice alike.

The score given for a specific wine reflects the quality of the wine at its best. I often tell people that evaluating a wine and assigning a score to a beverage that will change and evolve in many cases for up to 10 or more years is analogous to taking a photograph of a marathon runner. Much can be ascertained but, like a picture of a moving object, the wine will also evolve and change. Wines from obviously badly corked or defective bottles are retasted, since a wine from a single bad bottle does not indicate an entirely spoiled batch. Many of the wines reviewed have been tasted many times, and the score represents a cumulative average of the wine's performance in tastings to date. **Scores, however, do not reveal the important facts about a wine. The written commentary that accompanies the ratings is a better source of information regarding the wine's style and personality, its relative quality vis-à-vis its peers, and its value and aging potential than any score could ever indicate.**

In terms of awarding points, my scoring system gives every wine a base of 50 points. The wine's general color and appearance merit up to 5 points. Since most wines today are well made, thanks to modern technology and the increased use of professional oenologists, they tend to receive at least 4, often 5 points. The aroma and bouquet merit up to 15 points, depending on the intensity level and dimension of the aroma and bouquet as well as the cleanliness of the wine. The flavor and finish merit up to 20 points, and again, intensity of flavor, balance, cleanliness, and depth and length on the palate are all important considerations when giving out points. Finally, the overall quality level or potential for further evolution and improvement-aging merits up to 10 points.

Scores are important for the reader to gauge a professional critic's overall qualitative placement of a wine vis-à-vis its peer group. However, it is also vital to consider the description of the wine's style, personality, and potential. No scoring system is perfect, but a system that provides for flexibility in scores. If applied by the same taster without prejudice, can quantify different levels of wine quality and provide the reader with one professional's judgment. **However, there can never be any substitute for your own palate nor any better education than tasting the wine yourself.**

IN THIS ISSUE

2002 Bordeaux (2-15)

Santa Barbara & Central Coast (26-33)

2001 California Zinfandels (15-26)

Piedmont (33-54)

Recommended New Releases (54-64)

SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

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