

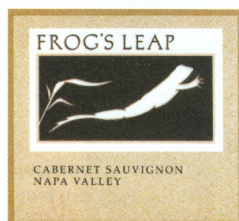
# Wine & Spirits

SPECIAL ISSUE  
24TH ANNUAL BUYING GUIDE

# 100 BEST WINES OF THE YEAR

## BEST CABERNET AND CABERNET BLEND

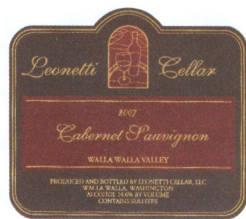
Last year, the *Wine & Spirits* tasting panels assessed more than 10,200 wines. These 100 received our highest recommendations, and are the wines we believe are performing at the top of their respective categories. We present the American wines first, the top performers in varietal categories from tastings reported from December 2009 through October 2010. Imported wines follow, the top-scoring selections from specific regions recommended over the same time period. These are the wines our panels recommended most strongly and our individual critics scored most highly. **Joshua Greene, Patrick J. Comiskey and Wolfgang M. Weber** reviewed the American wines.



**94 | Frog's Leap** \$42

**2007 Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon**

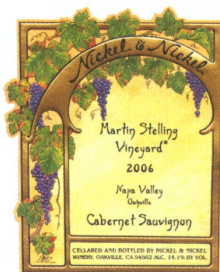
John Williams at Frog's Leap is not out to make the ripest cabernet in the valley. He's a grower, and it appears that he tuned his organically farmed vines precisely to the long, moderate 2007 season, producing a wine that stretches from the roots to the leaves and reaches toward cool, pure, tightly balanced fruit. It's an elegant cabernet, the fruit transparent enough to show the character of Rutherford through the lens of woodland strawberries and red and black currants. Delicious on release, this gets better with air, as it will in bottle. A wine to cellar for ten years and enjoy along the way with lamb. *Frog's Leap, Rutherford, CA*



**94 | Leonetti** \$85

**2007 Walla Walla Valley Cabernet Sauvignon**

Like most of the Leonetti cabernets in the last few vintages, this is wound as tight as a drum at first pour. There's just a whiff of black cherry, a hint of tomato leaf and brown herbs. The flavors will need years to develop, but what's there is classic and deep, the juicy black cherry fruit freshened by a touch of evergreen like a Blue Mountain breeze. For the cellar. (2,953 cases) *Leonetti Cellar, Walla Walla, WA*



**94 | Nickel & Nickel** \$140

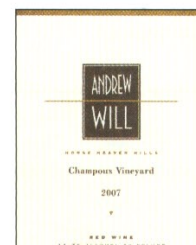
**2006 Oakville Napa Valley Martin Stelling Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon**

Far Niente lends two acres of its 100-acre Stelling Vineyard to Nickel & Nickel for this wine. The vines are in the hills of western Oakville, planted on volcanic loam over clay and gravel, one of the sweet spots for cabernet in the Napa Valley. This 2006 is seamless, a bright cassis-scented cabernet with zesty, youthful energy lifting it out of the substantial tannins. But even the tannins are lovely and rich, fine grained so they feel like silk. Supple and compelling now, this will age with grace. (547 cases) *Nickel & Nickel Winery, Oakville, CA*

**94 | Shafer** \$215

**2005 Stags Leap District Napa Valley Hillside Select Cabernet Sauvignon**

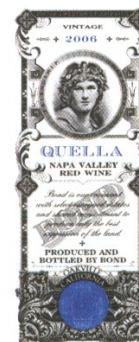
The texture is often what sets Hillside Select apart from other Napa Valley cabernets, the gentleness of its tannins managing to maintain the wine's shape and contour without flattening out. It appears to be seamless, sleek in the best sense of the word—a luxurious wine that feels authentic. Part of that is the cool, foresty mushroom flavor at the heart of the tannin; another part the beautiful balance between the tannins and the layers of dark fruit. A fine vintage of Hillside Select, this glows with the contemporary ripeness of Napa Valley cabernet without overreaching. (2,400 cases) *Shafer Vineyards, Napa, CA*



**96 | Andrew Will** \$68

**2007 Horse Heaven Hills Champoux Vineyard Cabernet franc**

leads the charge in this extraordinary wine from the Horse Heaven Hills' most storied vineyard. It has franc's savory aromas and flavors, like a dusting of cinnamon on fresh-picked cherries. It also has that variety's suppleness of texture and finely wrought tannins, augmented by cabernet sauvignon, merlot and petit verdot. The texture is simply a marvel, the tannins providing plenty of gravitas without getting in the way, persistent yet gentle. (1,079 cases) *Andrew Will Cellars, Vashon, WA*



**94 | Bond** \$275

**2006 Napa Valley Quella**

From a steep, nine-acre vineyard in the eastern hills of the Napa Valley, this is the first vintage of Quella. The soil includes river rock mixed with volcanic tuff, producing an expression that's distinctly different from Pluribus. What's similar is the way the flavors emanate from the structure, initially severe in its tannins, with a perfumed scent of roses and violets brightening their earthy, dusty blackness. There's a sense of restrained ripeness that's unusual in this part of the valley, with scents of sour cherry and cranberry following a beautiful arc of flavor. There's also a resonant umami character, like the flavor of grilled hedgehog mushrooms. This is vinous and fresh, with a clarity and surety to its structure that predict a long life ahead. *Bond, Oakville, CA*