

# CUTTING EDGE SELECTIONS

✧HAND-CRAFTED WINES✧

## San Francisco Chronicle

### Top 100 Wines 2008

#### **2006 Alma Rosa El Jabali Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills Chardonnay**

Richard Sanford shows his longtime talents with this lavish, ripe single-vineyard Chardonnay. Limpid, orange-driven aromas presage honeyed fig and citrus, with a bit of dry wood presence and a pleasing touch of sweetness on the palate, matched by firm, minerally bite. Balanced, well-defined Chardonnay from a parcel Sanford has farmed since 1983.

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#### **2007 Bacchant Wines Luli Santa Lucia Highlands Chardonnay**

A superb expression of mostly unoaked Chardonnay in a new venture from Pinot grower Jeff Pisoni and master sommelier Sara Floyd. Fresh, clean notes of apple, tangerine, white almond and mineral. A lush, fruit-driven texture gives it weight, but its well-focused definition propels it beyond many of the unoaked specimens currently appearing.

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#### **2006 Bergstrom Winery Cumberland Reserve Willamette Valley Pinot Noir**

Josh Bergstrom's cuvee is often a standout, and in 2006 it seemed to show a touch more restraint than some of his single-vineyard wines, though the 60 percent new oak certainly won't disappoint those seeking full-bore Pinot. The style is bold and ripe, with terrific sweet fruit - plum, huckleberry, tamarind - and a savory tang on the long, breathy finish.

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#### **2006 Stoller JV Estate Dundee Hills Pinot Noir**

Both bottlings from Bill Stoller's Dundee Hills parcel impressed us, but this classic Oregon bottling from younger vines gets extra points for value. The savory opening - copper, tangerine, tamari and cranberry - leads to a juicy, full profile notable for its clarity and a sappy sweet note that extends the finish.

### **2005 Cristom Eola-Amity Hills Estate Syrah**

Wait, aren't Steve Doerner's wines supposed to be in the Pinot section? The veteran winemaker also produces exceptional (if geographically off message) Syrah from his Oregon estate. This latest release includes a touch of white Viognier, as is typical in Cote Rotie. It perfectly expresses bright Syrah notes of finely milled black pepper, sweet smoked meat and a touch of cocoa, plus smoky berry. A bit of decanting brings out richer, ripe red fruit, though it retains the subtle earthiness that makes Cristom Pinots so good.

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### **2005 Star Lane Vineyard Santa Ynez Valley Cabernet Sauvignon**

Former Missouri banker Jim Dierberg's project in Happy Canyon is setting a high standard for Central Coast Cabernet, with help from winemaker Nick de Luca and consultant David Ramey. A serious, evocative wine, with loamy dark notes of mocha and leather, plus silky berry, perfumed plum and chewy, ripe tannins.

## **20 under \$40**

Every year we face the same dilemma. Though we try to find widely available selections for the Top 100 Wines, many of the top wines are made from modest vineyards in small amounts - which often means they're expensive, even if we keep a keen eye on prices. No question many will be for special occasions.

But the talented winemakers behind our top wines often produce other wines in greater quantities or for lower prices. We selected 20 terrific values under \$40, all from wineries that produced some of our Top 100 selections.

-- **2006 Alma Rosa Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Blanc**

-- **2007 Bergstrom Winery Dr. Bergstrom Willamette Valley Riesling**

-- **2005 Three Saints Santa Ynez Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (Star Lane)**

**Jon Bonné, Chronicle Wine Editor**  
**Sunday, December 7, 2008**