

Publisher's PICKS



PHOTO: CATHY TWIGG-BLUMEL

Meridith May visits Raymond Vineyards.

In each issue THE TASTING PANEL's Publisher and Executive Editor, Meridith May, selects her favorite wines and spirits of the month. Check here for the latest arrivals in our offices, the hottest new brands on the market and an occasional revisited classic.

Worthy of a smooch.

French-style double bizou.

Wildly infatuated.

Seriously smitten.

Head over heels in love.

Wines



Columbia Crest 2007 Reserve Merlot, Columbia Valley (\$22) The addition of 16.7% Cabernet Sauvignon may have actually softened this deep-dish berry pie of a WA State Merlot; dusty tannins interact with a velvety texture and a round, gobby sensation of fruit, with a distant note of dark chocolate. **93**
STE. MICHELLE WINE ESTATES



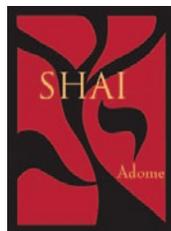
Umani Ronchi 2009 Fonte del Re, Lacrima di Morro d'Alba, Italy (\$20) From the Marche region in Italy, Lacrima is the varietal and the wine is as unique as I have tasted. Beginning with a nose of violets and grape lollipops, the soft billowy palate demands attention from a steady flow of violets, roses and a blueberry cobbler effect. A hint of green olive gives it some earthiness but the inherent sweet-toned cranberry finish leaves you remembering this wine for a long time. **91**
BEDFORD INTERNATIONAL WINES



Mercer Estates 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon, Columbia Valley (\$23) Fruit from Horse Heaven Hills and Wahluke Slope vineyards results in a beauty: structured to be ripe and lush front-of-the-palate; fruit-driven with coffee bean/soil, rich depth and narrowly focused acidity that join up in a deep-dish blueberry and mocha cream finish. **93**



Shai Cellars 2008 Adome, Santa Ynez Valley (\$34) A blend of 65% Syrah and 35% Cabernet Sauvignon, Shai (Hebrew for "gift") is a delicately wrapped package of lavender and pepper. It opens up to a dense array of plums, sweet cherries and dates; satin textured with a meaty core, mint enters mid-palate but fades to allow mocha cream to emerge at the finish. **91**



Sculpterra Winery 2007 Syrah, Paso Robles (\$32) Deliciously paired fruit and spice work together from start to finish, dusted with white pepper; a juicy treat with its plum pudding nose and cherry-vanilla-cream middle. **89**



Terra d'Oro 2007 Zinfandel, SHR Field Blend, Amador County (\$30) A blend of 80% Zin, 13% Petite Sirah and 7% Barbera, this is one of the most superbly textured wines I have tasted. The nose is ripe and incredibly concentrated with blueberries, raisins and cherry-tinged cocoa powder; the palate's silky entry is tongue-coating bliss. Chalky and juicy at the same time. **94**



TFE WINES

Spirits



Rose Blossom by Dragon Bleu Vodka, France (\$30) Blueberries and vanilla accent a budding rose aroma. The lushest, warmest palate entry of candied rose petals with a sensation of melting sugar. **90**



Adult Chocolate Milk, USA (\$20) Is it confusing when memories of childhood light up part of your brain while indulging in this daring dessert-spirit? Who cares—it has all the milky cocoa goodness on the nose and, perhaps in disguise, the delicious taste of temptation. **89**



ADULT BEVERAGE COMPANY