

WINE ENTHUSIAST BUYING GUIDE, DECEMBER 2011

Charles Smith 2008 “Royal City” Syrah 98pts

An Amaro-like mix of bitters and herbs; this is exceptionally dense and dark. The fruit is a grace note; the big flavors come from herb, earth, rock, barrel and more. Licorice, baking spices, smoke, black cherry, Bourbon barrel, and on it goes. Huge and dense and seemingly endless.

Charles Smith 2008 “King Coal” Cabernet Sauvignon-Syrah 96pts, Editor’s Choice

This is the first time a King Coal has been made, all sourced from the Stoneridge Vineyard. It’s a unique and delicious wine, seamless and complex. The flavors are amazingly detailed, with layer upon layer of candied fruit, raisins, Bourbon barrel, Asian spice, ginger, toast and more. The flavors pile on and continue into a seemingly endless finish, resonating into a spicy blend of fruit and Christmas cookies.

K Vintners 2007 “The Hustler” Syrah 96pts

Only the second time The Hustler has been made, this spent 38 months in barrel. All the fruit is sourced from the Morrison Lane vineyard. Port-like and amazingly concentrated, it’s about as far as a dry wine can go and show fruit that is not buried in new oak. Here the fruit is a dark blend of berries and cassis; there is a dense layer of chocolate and earth underneath, with a finish loaded with baking spices.

K Vintners 2008 “Ovide” En Cerise Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon-Syrah 95pts, Cellar Selection

Sourced from another of the Cayuse vineyards, this is two-thirds Cabernet Sauvignon and one-third Syrah—a proven blend in Walla Walla. There is a potently aromatic herbal quality to the perfectly ripened fruit that marries black cherry and earthy tannins to the herbs. A big wine, with dried leaf character dominating the tannins. Good length, in an Italian style, with a good decade of life ahead.

K Vintners 2008 “The Creator” 95pts, Editor’s Choice

This edition of The Creator is a one-time only mix of 43% Cabernet Sauvignon from Stoneridge, 21% Cabernet from Cailloux, and 36% Syrah from Morrison Lane. It’s edgy and tight, with sharply defined corners—herbal, with a leafy/stemmy note, well-integrated into wild, brambly berry fruits. The 50% new oak is virtually invisible at this point; it fills out the mouthfeel but does not show specifically.

K Vintners 2008 “Roma” En Chamberlin Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon-Syrah 94pts

A similar blend to the Ovide; this is 62% Cabernet Sauvignon and 38% Syrah. The fruit is more forward here, with pretty blackberry and black cherry flavors, and a dark and forceful streak of iron and charcoal and licorice. A light lavender note adds interest.

K Vintners 2008 “Northridge” Syrah 94pts, Editor’s Choice

This may be the quintessential site among the extensive Milbrandt vineyards that produce much of the K Vintners Syrah lineup. The Northridge bottling has amazing purity and concentration, with a beguiling mix of deep berry fruits and gravelly minerality. Supple power, muscular and dense.

K Vintners 2008 “Phil Lane” Syrah 94pts, Cellar Selection

A deep and compact wine with Syrah fruit styled with a Cabernet-like verticality, this layers ripe berry fruit with streaks of graphite, ash and rock. The flavors persist through a lingering, super clean finish with the balance and acidity to age. What are initially tightly wound subtleties of herb and spice may well expand into nuanced complexity over the next decade or more.

K Vintners 2008 “Morrison Lane” Syrah 93pts

With its excellent concentration of pure fruit power, this is like taking your mouth through a 100 yard dash of raspberry, blueberry and black cherry fruit, right down the heart of the throat. Along the way you find a tight wrapping of rock and espresso, but it’s the snappy, sappy fruit that really shines here. Great length.

K Vintners 2008 “Pheasant Vineyard” Syrah 93pts, Editor’s Choice

First you smell chocolate, then it quickly shows a piercing minerality, with tart boysenberry and pomegranate fruit. Dense without being heavy, it has compact layering that shows especially in the aromatics. A subtle, refined, elegant wine that does not feel at all like its 15% alcohol.

K Vintners 2008 “The Deal” Sundance Vineyard Syrah 93pts, Editor’s Choice

The Deal is the real deal—Syrah with all the peppery herb and earthy fruit flavor that this grape can provide. A smoked ham/cured meat component emerges as flavors weave into the back of the throat; nicely integrated. Threads of herb and dried leaf continue into the finish, along with a streak of pure cherry.

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K Vintners 2008 “El Jefe” En Chamberlin Tempranillo 91pts

The blend includes 20% Cabernet Sauvignon. The En Chamberlin Vineyard predictably shows a generous dose of the Cayuse funk, along with solid and deep flavors of earth, stem, herb and wild brambly fruits. It all comes together in a tight and spicy wine with more funk than Spanish character. Unique and precise, with lingering flavors.

K Vintners 2008 “Milbrandt” Syrah 90pts

The Milbrandt bottling is all Sundance Vineyard fruit, cropped a little higher, and macerated with fewer stems for a shorter time. It is a fine introduction to the K Vintners style; showing good density in a moderately ripe format. The fruit is brambly and tart, with some earth and stem flavors, good balance, and a hint of the grape’s gamy aspect.

K Vintners 2008 “The Boy” Grenache 90pts

From the (Cayuse) Armada Vineyard, the blend includes 8% Syrah. Very floral, with lovely scents of lily and spice. It’s all fruit, with no new wood, and some whole cluster flavors of bark and stem. All nicely integrated and subtle, adding texture and detail. There is a streak of balsamic, and tart berry fruit flavors with a powerful, peppery, earthy component from the vineyard.