In this issue of the *Insider*, Bruce Sanderson turns our attention to the Hill of Corton, in Burgundy’s Côte de Beaune. The whites of Corton-Charlemagne are not as robust as their cousins the Montrachets, but these high-acidity, lean-profile wines are replete with apple and mineral, pleasing to the most discriminating palate. We spotlight eight here; they’re expensive, but they’re excellent.

From California, James Laube recommends a slew of outstanding Cabernets and Chardonnays, and James Molesworth gives the nod to two Vouvray from the Loire’s S.A. Huët (as well as Huët’s top late-harvest white, one of two French classics you’ll find among the Hot Wines on page 4).

Thomas Matthews steers the bargain hunters toward the reds of Spain, where table wines across the country are coming of age. Three of these outstanding reds are priced at $25 or less—Incréible!

**France / Burgundy**

In the Côte de Beaune, the Hill of Corton breaks the escarpment with a freestanding hill crowned by woods. Its vineyards sweep roughly 180 degrees from a southeast orientation on the Ladoix-Serrigny side, south through Aloxe-Corton to the northwest-facing Pernand-Vergelesses. This renowned vineyard offers a style of grand cru in contrast to its illustrious cousins farther south in Puligny- and Chassagne-Montrachet. To my palate, the Cortons are less fruit-filled and refined, based more in mineral and apple aromas and flavors with higher acidities and leaner profiles. These characteristics are further emphasized when the grapes come from the west- and northwest-facing Pernand side. “It is a wine of light rather than a wine of heat,” explains Jean-Charles Le Bault de la Morinière, proprietor of Domaine Bonneau du Martray, referring to the westerly slope. Most of these 2002s should hit their stride in seven to 10 years.—B.S.

**Bonneau du Martray**

Corton-Charlemagne 2002
94 points | $100 | 700 cases imported

Bonneau du Martray is the largest holder of Corton-Charlemagne. This shows fine density, even a slight astringency. Ripe apple and peach flavors are rich and persistent, with vanilla and mineral notes emerging on the long, expansive finish, which reveals the wine’s potential. Best from 2008 through 2018.—B.S.

**Lucien Le Moine**

Corton-Charlemagne 2002
94 points | $150 | 50 cases made

This starts out lush and mouthfilling, gaining elegance and intensity. Shows plenty of oak, lending butterscotch and spice accents, but also peach, citrus and mineral flavors that will emerge with time. Best from 2008 through 2018.—B.S.

**Bertagna**

Corton-Charlemagne 2002
93 points | $140 | 6 cases imported

Flamboyant, mouthfilling and powerful. More forward in style than its peers, with butterscotch, apricot, vanilla and sandalwood aromas and flavors. Well-balanced, with a long, smoky aftertaste. Best from 2007 through 2018.—B.S.

**Tollot-Beaut**

Corton-Charlemagne 2002
93 points | $110 | 30 cases imported

Ample and creamy, this white combines elegance and intensity, with a mineral streak running right through its core. Apple, vanilla and nutmeg round out the flavor spectrum. Keeps on pulsing through the long finish. Best from 2008 through 2018.—B.S.
**Antonin Guyon**  
Corton-Charlemagne Domaine Hippolyte Thevenot 2002  
92 points | $100 | 90 cases imported

Full and rich, but stopping short of opulent, this white reflects apple, toast and spice notes such as clove and nutmeg. A vibrant structure keeps it focused. Lingers nicely on the finish. A forward style, with power in reserve. Best from 2007 through 2018.—B.S.

**Maillard Père & Fils**  
Corton White 2002  
92 points | $69 | 50 cases imported

Youthful, reticent and compact, with a well of apple, earth and stone flavors waiting to be tapped. Shows toasty oak, but the terroir will shine through with time. Best from 2010 through 2020.—B.S.

**Chandon de Briailles**  
Corton-Charlemagne 2002  
90 points | $96 | 6 cases imported

This smells and tastes like ripe apple, with anise and oak spice notes. Pulls together at the finish, suggesting it will improve with time. Fine length, just awkward today. Chandon de Briailles wines are built for the long haul. Best from 2010 through 2020.—B.S.

**California**

**Ladera**  
Cabernet Sauvignon Howell Mountain 2002  
92 points | $65 | 710 cases made

A ripe, pure, expressive style, with rich, dense currant, earth, wild berry and black cherry fruit; this has the kind of structure, depth and focus that bodes well for the future. Finishes with rich, chewy tannins, but the fruit more than meets that challenge. Best from 2007 through 2014.—J.L.

**Steele**  
Chardonnay Carneros Sangiacomo Vineyard 2001  
92 points | $26 | 500 cases made

Rich and full-bodied, with ripe, fleshy pear, guava, mango and hints of tropical fruit. It holds its rich, fruity profile and the flavors glide along, ending with a dash of citrus.—J.L.

**Philip Togni**  
Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley Tanbark Hill Vineyard 2002  
92 points | $48 | 1,500 cases made

Chewy and a bit rustic, with firm, austere tannins, it nonetheless possesses a dense, rich, concentrated core of perfumed Cabernet fruit, with layers of currant, cedar, anise, sage and nutmeg. A bit backward now, it needs cellaring. Best from 2007 through 2015.—J.L.

**Buoncristiani**  
Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley 2002  
91 points | $75 | 302 cases made

Saturated inky-dark color, with ultraripe currant, plum and wild berry fruit, this wine pushes the envelope of ripeness without going overboard. Intense and concentrated, it shows a touch of heat on the finish, but that's a minor quibble given the power and excitement of the flavors. Best from 2007 through 2012.—J.L.

**Beringer**  
Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley Private Reserve 2001  
90 points | $115 | 9,600 cases made

Massive, with firm tannins and fine structure, this tightly wound young wine will need time to show its stuff, as it's dense and concentrated, offering only glimpses of what lies ahead. Dried currant, herb, sage and wild berry flavors, with chewy tannins on the finish. Those patient enough to cellar it may be in for a pleasant surprise. Best from 2008 through 2014.—J.L.
Chimney Rock
Cabernet Sauvignon Stags Leap District 2002
90 points | $49 | 11,000 cases made
Smooth and generous, an open-knit style with rich currant, plum and black cherry fruit that’s well-centered. The tannins are fleshy and elegant, leading to a long, flavorful aftertaste. Best from 2006 through 2012.—J.L.

France / Loire

One of the Loire’s flagship estates over the past two generations, S.A. Huët in Vouvray has turned in a masterful performance in 2002. The 2002 Le Haut-Lieu and Le Mont cuvées were outstanding (reviewed last year) but the just-released cuvées from the Clos du Bourg vineyard are another step up.—J.M.

S.A. Huët
Vouvray Moelleux Clos du Bourg 1ère Trie 2002
94 points | $60 | 789 cases made
Sweet earth, truffle, graham, honey and spice aromas and flavors course through this full-bodied Vouvray, along with alluring matchstick and apple flavors. Long, sweet finish ripples with acidity. Shows more flash and power now from its sweetness; its minerality should develop with time. Drink now through 2020.—J.M.

S.A. Huët
Vouvray Demi-Sec Clos du Bourg 2002
93 points | $35 | 1,295 cases made
A stunning nose of honeycomb, cardamom, ginger and caramelized peach is followed by a slightly sweet yet incredibly lacy palate of ginger, graham, fig and green tea. All of it supported by mouthwatering acidity that lets all the flavors hang effortlessly through a lengthy finish. Drink now through 2020.—J.M.

Spain

One of the most exciting aspects of Spain’s recent progress with reds is that regions all around the country are making some truly impressive wines. This roundup ranges from the Mediterranean mountains of Conca de Barberá, Montsant and Priorat to the hot inland vineyards of Jumilla in the southeast to Ribera del Duero and the high continental region of Bierzo in the northwest. And there’s not a Cabernet or Merlot in the bunch.—T.M.

Bodegas Monasterio
Ribera del Duero Hacienda Monasterio Crianza 2001
92 points | $39 | 15,000 cases made
Elegant and polished, with blackberry and black cherry flavors accented by toasty, vanilla-scented oak and backed by focused tannins. Graceful through the long, floral finish. Drink now through 2009.—T.M.

Bodegas Pinord
Priorat Balcons 2002
91 points | $40 | NA cases made
An appealing combination of elegance and rootedness, this red is supple and balanced in texture, yet shows typical, traditional flavors of wild berry, mountain herbs and minerals. Drink now through 2010.—T.M.

Mähler-Besse
Jumilla Excelencia 2003
90 points | $24 | 300 cases made
This powerful red is balanced and focused. It shows flavors of black fruit, smoke, game and mineral, while the structure is polished and firm. Subtle, but brings you back for another sip. Drink now through 2010.—T.M.

Beceite
Bierzo El Castro de Valtuille 2002
90 points | $25 | 1,000 cases imported
This lively red maintains a taut balance of firm tannins and crisp acidity, which support fresh, clean flavors of tart cherries, strawberries and herbs. Not huge, but well-proportioned. Drink now through 2009.—T.M.
S.A. Huët
Vouvray Cuvée Constance 2002
99 points | $135/500ml | 199 cases made
This delivers the panoply of ginger, lemon cream, green tea, honeycomb and mango flavors you expect from a world-class dessert wine, combined with a lacy, filigreed texture and mineral underpinning that is rare. So pure and balanced, all the sweetness is absorbed on the finish, leaving an incredibly tender yet exhilarating impression of fresh fruit. This has a fraction less density than the perfect '97 (100 points), but that's splitting hairs. Drink now through 2040. From France.—J.M.

Louis Jadot
Corton-Charlemagne 2002
95 points | $115 | NA cases made
The grapes are grown on the top parcel of Jadot’s Les Pougets site. Refined, with a dense core of apple surrounded by pear and apple pie spice aromas and flavors. Bright and impeccably balanced, this is harmonious and well-defined, yet dense and still to reveal all its charms. Fine length with a creamy texture. Best from 2008 through 2020. From France.—B.S.

Fisher
Chardonnay Sonoma County Mountain Estate Vineyard 2003
94 points | $45 | 450 cases made
Beautifully crafted, rich, opulent and deep, with layers of ripe pear, fig, apricot and melon. This tightly focused young wine benefits from light oak nuances, which give it a dash of hazelnut and spice. The finish is long and complex, with tons of flavor. From California.—J.L.

Torres
Conca de Barberá Grans Muralles 1999
93 points | $100 | 200 cases imported
Alluring and elegant, this is a modern-style wine with distinctive regional flavors. The smoky, chocolate notes from new oak frame intriguing notes of wild berry, mountain herbs and minerals. It’s focused and still fresh. Drink now through 2009. From Spain.—T.M.