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## IN THIS ISSUE...

### [Moody's Hot Ten](#)

- [Value #1](#)  
Chalone Chardonnay Monterey County 2005 - \$11.95
- [Value #2](#)  
Pretty Sally Estate Sauvignon Blanc (Victoria, Australia) 2005 - \$22
- [Value #3](#)  
Owl Ridge Cabernet Sauvignon Vineyard Select Sonoma County 2004 - \$38
- [Value #4](#)  
Beaulieu Vineyard Tapestry Napa Valley 2003 - \$37.50
- [Value #5](#)  
Darioush Signature Merlot Napa Valley 2005 - \$39.95
- [Other Great Values](#)
- [Article: The Wine Snob Syndrome, a Misdiagnosis?](#)

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## MOODY'S HOT TEN

### Value #1

**Chalone Chardonnay Monterey County 2005** — From a winery that was not only extant but second only to Chateau Montelena in the 1976 Paris Tasting—and seemingly located in the middle of nowhere. This is not the Estate biggie; however, it is well-made and an excellent value.

“Firm acidity and crisp peach, pear and nectarine flavors.” An easy-drinking, pleasurable Chardonnay with or without food. Enjoyed recently with chilled shrimp salad. [www.chalonevineyard.com](http://www.chalonevineyard.com) \$11.95

[back](#)

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### Value #2

**Pretty Sally Estate Sauvignon Blanc (Victoria, Australia) 2005** — This winery is located just north of Melbourne in the cool-climate region of central Victoria. The combination of high elevation, morning fog, cool breezes, extended sunshine and Victorian “dirt” create an auspicious setting for engendering excellent wines.

Pretty Sally is one of the few to act as its own importer. Nearly the entire production is for the U.S. market—and the winery delivers!

Crisp, clean, intense and intriguing wine. It displays “pretty” peach and pear flavors with hints of guava and passion fruit. Long, lush finish. Enclosed with a screw cap. [www.prettysally.com](http://www.prettysally.com) \$22

[back](#)

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#### Value #3

**Owl Ridge Cabernet Sauvignon Vineyard Select Sonoma County 2004** — Truly a \$50 or \$60 wine with a \$38 price tag, this is a blend of two top Sonoma County vineyards. The primary one (85%) is in the northwest corner of the county about five miles from the coast and situated 2,000 feet above sea level.

Barrel-aged in 100% French oak with 40% new barrels, the resulting wine has bountiful, ripe fruit, deep, rich, complex flavors and a succulent finish. After this wine received a Best of Class, Gold Medal at the 2006 L.A. County Fair and a Best of Class, Double Gold Medal at the 2006 California State Fair, I’m shocked there is even one case left of the tiny 304-case production. A phone call to the winemaker on Sept. 1, 2006, verified that there is a small amount available for online orders. Act quickly! [www.owlridge.com](http://www.owlridge.com) \$38

[back](#)

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#### Value #4

**Beaulieu Vineyard Tapestry Napa Valley 2003** — When Tapestry was first produced from this famous winery, I was not impressed. I guess I was expecting something akin to the Private Reserve. Since then, great strides have been made including a change in the varietal components. I’m beginning to see a resemblance to the big one!

The 2003 vintage has received mixed reviews, but the grapes for Tapestry were picked late—the 85-degree October days leading up to harvest were perfect for the primary component, Cabernet Sauvignon.

Lots of complex, ripe flavors—right up there with the excellent ‘01 and ‘02. Over the next six months, should gain complexity as will its sister wine, Dulcet. Excellent structure with the Cabernet contributing to the power, complexity and backbone, Merlot rounding out the taste and Petite Verdot adding a hint of spice. 20,000 cases produced. [www.bvwine.com](http://www.bvwine.com) \$37.50

[back](#)

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#### Value #5

**Darioush Signature Merlot Napa Valley 2005** — Darioush is a must-visit winery just north of Napa on Silverado Trail. This particular wine hails from three estate vineyards with each contributing unique flavor characteristics.

The lush flavor includes dark cherry fruit with hints of bittersweet chocolate. It also has interesting smoky nuances that are more typical of top Pinot Noirs. The 1,600-foot elevation of the estate vineyards on Mount Veeder provides for enhanced varietal flavors as well as a unique concentration and a “mineral-earth texture.” Needs two years in the bottle to allow full integration of oak and tannin. [www.darioush.com](http://www.darioush.com) \$39.95

[back](#)

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#### Other Great Values

##### White:

**Wolf Blass Yellow Label Chardonnay South Australia 2005** — For a complementary dish, the winery recommends parchment-wrapped salmon with soy, ginger and shallot dressing served on a bed of wilted Chinese greens. [www.beringerblass.com](http://www.beringerblass.com) \$11.99

**Schloss Vollrads Riesling Kabinett Halb-Trocken (Rheingau, Germany) 2004** — Drier than traditional Kabinett, this is an excellent food wine. A moderating 11% alcohol. Bright and open, elegant with aromas of apricots and a refined minerality. [www.schlossvollrads.com](http://www.schlossvollrads.com) \$16

##### Red:

**Golden Kaan Shiraz (Western Cape, South Africa) 2004** — “Ripe berries and spicy flavors.” This wine brings along with it a little South African “earthiness.” Try with a buffalo burger or a meat pizza. [www.goldenkaan.com](http://www.goldenkaan.com) \$9.99

**Rosemount G S M (McLaren Vale, Australia) 2002** — Grenache and Syrah—a lovely combination. The winery recommends pairing with beef with olives, venison or game pie![www.rosemount.com](http://www.rosemount.com) \$18.95

**Pretty Sally Estate Cabernet Sauvignon (Victoria, Australia) 2003** — Elegant, complex, balanced wine. In a land where Cabernet usually places third behind Shiraz and Grenache, this is a find! 2,800 cases produced. [www.prettysally.com](http://www.prettysally.com) \$24

[back](#)

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#### **THE WINE SNOB SYNDROME, A MISDIAGNOSIS?**

By Denman Moody

Recently, a wine writer described a wine snob, among other things, as one who never shared his or her great wines with anyone. To me, someone like this may or may not be a wine snob. He or she just may be a greedy, selfish collector.

Many years ago, Robert Parker wrote an article about a person who invited him over for dinner and a “tour” of his great cellar. After showing off all the trophy wines, the person, without asking Parker what wine or even what kind of wine he might enjoy with dinner, picked a 1969 (read, lousy year for Bordeaux) Bordeaux, and headed for the dinner table. Even though this person was probably a subscriber of Parker’s “Wine Advocate,” Parker published this information knowing that this greedy, selfish collector probably never read the periodical but told everyone he did!

I really don’t think there are very many wine snobs. That being said, I can’t stress enough the need to be very careful in describing who is or who is not a wine snob. It depends on the venue. Let’s say I’m conducting a tasting of First Growth Bordeaux wines for a group of serious wine nuts. It is not only apropos but very interesting and entertaining for them to hear the details of my disagreement with Paul Pontallier at Chateau Margaux in 1987 regarding the 1983 Chateau Margaux tasted there from barrel in 1985 vs. the 1986 Chateau Margaux tasted there from barrel with him in 1987 (Pontallier was right of course)!

On the other hand, at one of my favorite tastings—one I co-hosted for the Houston Chapter of the International Wine and Food Society, Zinfandels and Po’ Boy sandwiches—this kind of banter would be wine snobbery. Speaking of wine snobs, there were none present, as you might expect, at a Zinfandel and Po’ Boy sandwich tasting.

In a way, I feel sorry for the wine snob (even though he or she may not feel sorry for himself or herself). The “expensive-only” wine snob is missing out on so much. A chilled, slightly sweet \$4.99 white Zinfandel paired with a chilled chicken salad sandwich and chips outdoors on a blisteringly hot day can be quite refreshing and imminently enjoyable. And a jug wine or even wine-in-a-box can be a perfect food match (or by itself) at certain times and under certain conditions. Somehow, a \$1,000 Montrachet from the Domaine de la Romanee-Conti with canned sardines and crackers while fishing from a small canoe seems ludicrous.

The “French-only” wine snob is generally an ostrich. He or she will hardly ever submit knowingly to a blind tasting for fear that his or her narrow-minded views might be exposed to the light of day.

On the other hand, someone who might seem like a wine snob may not be at all—that’s why one must be careful about making wine-snobbery pronouncements. I recently had lunch with a very polished and aristocratic friend who has almost all French wines in his vast cellar. When he asked me to pick the wine, I ordered a Revana Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley 2002. He checked out the label, took one sip and announced, “That’ll work,” and set out that afternoon to purchase a case. Many haven’t bothered to experiment because they’re happy with what they’ve got and are content to drink what they like and have enjoyed in the past. Obviously this man and many like him are not wine snobs.

Having said all this, the true wine snob (or slob) is one who talks ad infinitum about his or her priceless wines and wine connections at dinner parties or other gatherings where wine is not even remotely connected to the event (or is overbearing about it at an inappropriate wine event). This snobbery syndrome also can be used to describe one who prates on and on about the great art collection, the movie stars he or she knows or whatever. There’s a time and place for everything.

In summary, one dogpaddles in dangerous waters when one starts describing who is or who isn’t a wine snob. A wine snob to one person may be one of the most interesting conversationalists to a fellow wine lover.

In a sort of Will Rogers vein, I’ve met very few wine people I didn’t like, and in some 28 years of being a wine writer/consultant/entertainer/quaffer, I can’t think of a single wine snob. I don’t know

if wine makes people nice or if nice people like wine!

[back](#)

Have a question for Denman? [Click here](#) to send him an email.