

THE

WASHING PANEL

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Brands James
Bond and
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a Legendary
Team*



Publisher's PICKS

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.

PHOTO: DIANNE FORCHIA



Nicholas Miller of Bien Nacido Vineyards with Meridith May at this year's Chardonnay Symposium. See more on our Chardonnay experiences, starting on page 108.

WINES



Picnic at Pomar Junction 2009 Chardonnay, Santa Barbara County (\$15)

This quaffer offers lightly brown-sugared lemon rinds on the mid-palate: What a great way to start a picnic! Further down on the menu is a banana and lime-slate sandwich. All aboard! **90**



M2 Wines 2011 Viognier, Fair Play (\$18)

Lodi winemaker/owner Layne Montgomery may refer to this stunning white from the Sierra Foothills' Fair Play appellation as "fruit-flavored rocket fuel," but we have more subtle terminology: The honeyed peach you expect from this varietal is refreshingly clean and youthfully fresh. It's an "A-type" personality in acidity and texture: lean and outgoing. The baking spice and stony core spurts exotic, tropical flower water to its bone dry finish. **91**



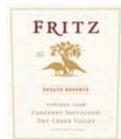
Caliza Winery 2010 Kissin' Cousins, Paso Robles (\$30)

A blend of 50% Viognier, 27% Roussanne and 23% Grenache that fills the senses with nectar of honeysuckle and ripe peach. There's an Old World quality here too: rich, unctuous and developed, with an inner brightness that attaches to every sip. **92**



Fritz 2008 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon, Dry Creek Valley (\$50)

Damp earth, dried fruit and rich raspberries play off one other on the nose, while a curve ball of spiced cranberries and sharp acidity flies to third base. Running to home is a toasted marshmallow that slides to earth, texturally juicy but spicy edged, zinging its way to more (sweeter) soil notes. **94**



SPIRITS



Lucky Dog Vodka, USA (\$22) A straightforward nose dives right into ginger and mandarin, giving paws to a playful palate of mint chocolate. Something to wag your tail about: good vodka! **92**



Tallarico Vodka, USA (\$43) This domestic rye and wheat vodka in the sleek black perfume-inspired bottle is pleasant and inviting from its aromas of peach and orange blossom. On the palate, gardenia and stone fruit—an apparent hint of Rainier cherries among others—is soft and delicate. Only at the lingering finish do you get spiced up with white pepper and a touch of ginger. **94**



TALLARICO SPIRITS CO.



Tequila REVOLUCION 100 Proof, Mexico (\$55)

A sensational nose that offers caramel sweetness and lime brightness. Viscous and bold, it eeks out a variety of fruit, nut and citrus (hazelnut, cherry and gardenia) while never letting go of a fresh agave backbone and a warm finish. **96**



El Cartel Blanco Tequila, Mexico (\$49)

With this tantalizing cooked agave/lime/chocolate powder nose, you are certain to want to dive in for your first sip. Unctuous and weighty, the liquid almost glides and slides across the tongue, while the upper palate is sparked with cayenne and white pepper. Green tea and spearmint appear on second pass, and the stony minerality, edged with a pinch of salt, also lines up in this layered white spirit. **93**



Worthy of a smooch.

French-style double bizou.

Wildly infatuated.

Seriously smitten.

Head over heels in love.