

SPECIAL ISSUE: France's Rhône Valley

Wine Spectator

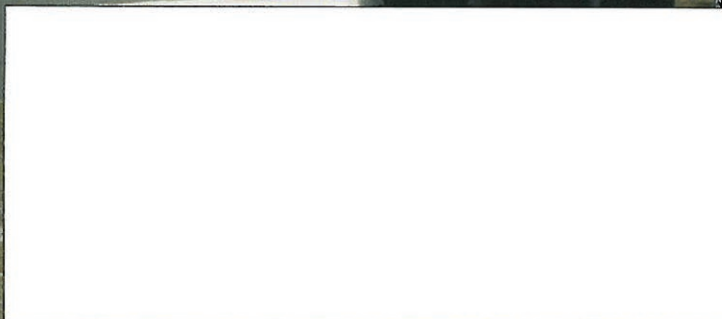
www.winespectator.com

Super Syrah, Great Grenache

2009 RHÔNES DELIVER
POWER WITH GRACE



NOV. 30, 2011



**SPOTLIGHT ON
CÔTE-RÔTIE**

**BEST MERLOTS
FROM CALIFORNIA**

**WINE LOVERS'
HOLIDAY MENU:
SOUTHERN CLASSICS**

CALIFORNIA

Merlot & Blends

90 Lasseter Family Paysage Sonoma Valley 2008 \$40 Vibrant and well-focused, with red currant, cedar and tomato leaf aromas and layered flavors of cherry and espresso spice that build momentum toward the finish. Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Malbec and Cabernet Franc. Drink now through 2016. 318 cases made.—*T.F.*

88 Kunde Estate Merlot Sonoma Valley 2006 \$18 Appealing for its nicely mature currant, cedar and anise aromas and soft flavors. Finishes with delicate tannins. Drink now. 14,000 cases made.—*T.F.*

88 Oberon Merlot Napa Valley 2008 \$22 A muscular red, with red currant and mineral aromas following through to plum, espresso and herb flavors, framed by burly tannins. Best from 2012 through 2018. 2,700 cases made.—*T.F.*

88 St. Clement Merlot Napa Valley 2008 \$28 Well-structured and fragrant, this features red currant and mocha aromas leading to sleek cherry, tomato leaf and anise flavors. Ends on a tart, tannic note. Drink now through 2016. 3,000 cases made.—*T.F.*

88 White Cottage Celestia Howell Mountain 2008 \$125 Dark and dense, with aromas of black currant and loamy earth joined by firm, complex flavors of plum, espresso and cedar, finishing with gritty tannins. Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon. Best after 2013. 110 cases made.—*T.F.*

87 Flora Springs Merlot Napa Valley 2009 \$24 A lean, focused red, showing plum, tomato leaf and spice notes. Drink now through 2016. 5,400 cases made.—*T.F.*