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14 Impressive and Diverse Wines

New reviews from Colorado and the Finger Lakes region of New York

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Tasting Highlights bring the best wines from our editors' most recent tastings to WineSpectator.com members.

While California, Oregon and Washington are easily the best-known U.S. states for wine production, bottlings are made in all 50 states—and some of them are worth your attention.

In upstate New York, cool-climate varietals—aromatic whites such as Riesling and Pinot Blanc, as well as reds such as Pinot Noir—continue to make strides. Forge Cellars is the Finger Lakes project of Château St.-Cosme vigneron Louis Barruol and his U.S. business partners. The two debut versions here, the deeper Les Allées and the more elegant regular bottling, both show promise. Heron Hill, Lamoreaux Landing and Keuka Lake Vineyards check in with more typical Finger Lakes styles, offering a Pinot Blanc, a sparkler and a Riesling, respectively.

Colorado's wine scene is developing quietly, with several dozen producers now operating and sourcing their fruit primarily from the Grand Valley AVA, located east of Grand Junction at about 4,700 feet of elevation. Early returns indicate Rhône varietals might be the ticket here, with bottlings of Syrah, Cinsault and Mourvèdre leading the way. As is usually the case in my tastings of Colorado wines, Ben Parsons' The Infinite Monkey Theorem is the leader in quality, offering versions with depth and polish. The Infinite Monkey Theorem's facility itself is located in downtown Denver, and owner/winemaker Parsons has made a name for himself with his innovative approach, packaging some of his wine in cans, using Colorado and California fruit, and assembling intriguing varietal blends.

So step outside your comfort zone and explore wines from the "other U.S.," where value abounds—most of the wines here can be had for under \$20.

FORGE Pinot Noir Finger Lakes Les Allées 2011 Score: 88 | \$32

This has a solid core of red licorice, steeped plum and cherry sauce flavors, lined with taut red licorice and singed apple wood notes. Focused and fine-grained through the finish, where the singed wood note lingers. Drink now through 2014. 65 cases made. —*J.M.*

FORGE Pinot Noir Finger Lakes 2011 Score: 87 | \$25

This has subtle tea and cinnamon shadings, with light-bodied dried cherry and strawberry notes that linger through the finish. Not big, but has sneaky length and nice mouthfeel. Drink now. 185 cases made. —*J.M.*



Courtesy of The Infinite Monkey Theorem

Ben Parsons of The Infinite Monkey Theorem is a leader in Colorado winemaking.

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HERON HILL Pinot Blanc Finger Lakes Morris Vineyard 2011 Score: 87 | \$18

Light but pure, with good melon and heather notes that show a flicker of salted butter through the finish. Drink now. 210 cases made. —*J.M.*

THE INFINITE MONKEY THEOREM The Blind Watchmaker White Grand Valley NV Score: 87 | \$17

Nectarine, peach and fennel notes are bouncy and mouthfilling, with nice energy on the finish. A fun, change-of-pace wine. Viognier and Roussanne. Drink now. 1,200 cases made. —*J.M.*

SNOWY PEAKS WINERY Syrah Grand Valley 2010 Score: 87 | \$19

A toasty, polished style, with ganache, black licorice and blackberry paste flavors that are nicely integrated. There's a solid, fleshy feel through the finish. Drink now. 72 cases made. —*J.M.*

HERON HILL Pinot Noir Finger Lakes Ingle Vineyard 2009 Score: 86 | \$20

Shows a briary edge, with singed wood spice, mulled cherry and blood orange notes and a dusting of firm tea leaves on the finish. Drink now. 211 cases made. —*J.M.*

KEUKA LAKE VINEYARDS Riesling Finger Lakes Semi-Dry 2011 Score: 86 | \$15

On the softer side, showing yellow apple and quince notes, with a modestly juicy edge on the finish. Drink now. 181 cases made. —*J.M.*

LAMOREAUX LANDING Blanc de Blanc Finger Lakes 2007 Score: 86 | \$25

A soft and friendly sparkler, with lemon curd, brioche and melon notes, backed by a lingering tangerine hint. Drink now. 395 cases made. —*J.M.*

SNOWY PEAKS WINERY Cinsault Grand Valley 2011 Score: 86 | \$17

Elegant, supple cherry and damson plum notes show a flicker of bergamot through the finish. Light but persistent. Contains 24 percent Petite Sirah. Drink now. 70 cases made. —*J.M.*

SNOWY PEAKS WINERY Mourvèdre Grand Valley 2009 Score: 86 | \$17

Offers a smoky, fleshy feel, with mulled plum and black cherry fruit and a lingering red licorice edge on the finish. This has good varietal character, with a nice tug of earth in the background. Contains 17 percent Syrah. Drink now. 85 cases made. —*J.M.*

TWO RIVERS Syrah Mesa County Château Deux Fleuves Vineyards 2011 Score: 86 | \$15

A juicy, fruity style, with good plum sauce and blackberry fruit coated with singed toast and dark spice notes. A touch firm, but with enough flesh for balance in the end. Drink now. 1,012 cases made. —*J.M.*

GARFIELD ESTATES Syrah Grand Valley 2011 Score: 85 | \$18

A fresh, forward style, with a bitter cherry frame to the notes of cherry preserves, red licorice and singed vanilla. Drink now. 150 cases made. —*J.M.*

THE INFINITE MONKEY THEOREM Sauvignon Blanc-Sémillon Grand Valley 2012 Score: 85 | \$17

Offers a friendly, juicy mix of tangerine, white peach and nectarine notes, with a flash of bubble gum on the finish. Drink now. 1,009 cases made. —*J.M.*

TALON WINERY Viognier Grand Valley 2011 Score: 85 | \$14

This offers a medium-weight mix of pineapple, star fruit and peach flavors, with a flash of lime on the finish. Drink now. 280 cases made. —*J.M.*