

# Wine Spectator

## 10 Impressive California Merlots

New reviews of both collectible and value Merlots from the promising 2007 vintage

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Some of the best names in California Merlot are just releasing their 2007s, and the results are impressive. There are both collectibles and good values among this week's new wines.

Merlot bargain lovers have long depended on two labels, Beringer and Sebastiani, and both overdeliver on quality for the price with their 2007 wines. Both the Beringer Napa Valley and Sebastiani Alexander Valley are soft, plush and appealing while remaining structured and complex.

Other solid values include the Waterstone Napa Valley and a long-familiar name, St. Francis, which crafted a zesty red for a mere \$22.

Topping this week's list of wines is Turnbull with its Oakville Merlot, an impressive varietal made by winemaker Peter Heitz that draws from multiple grape sources in the heart of Napa Valley.

If anyone knows Napa Merlot, it's Tom Rinaldi, who defined the Duckhorn style, and he continues to impress at Provenance, particularly with the 2007 Three Palms Vineyard.

Rocca continues to find success with cool-region Merlot with the Yountville Grigsby Vineyard 2007, crafted in its first year by former winemaker Celia Masyczek, and then passed on to Paul Colantuoni.

With my annual Merlot report drawing near, I'll continue to taste the 2007s as well as the more mixed bag of 2008s.

### **TURNBULL Merlot Oakville 2007 Score: 92 | \$30**

Rich, ripe and showy, with currant and toasty oak and fleshy, layered flavors of black cherry, mocha and cedar that firm up and gain complexity toward the finish. Drink now through 2015. 1,000 cases made. —*T.F.*

### **BERINGER Merlot Napa Valley 2007 Score: 90 | \$20**

Supple and richly structured, with appealing aromas of black cherry and toasty vanilla and easygoing flavors of currant and mocha that linger on fleshy tannins. Drink now through 2014. 11,000 cases made. —*T.F.*

### **PROVENANCE Merlot Napa Valley Three Palms Vineyard 2007 Score: 90 | \$65**

Tightly wound yet still sleek, with currant and mocha aromas and complex black cherry, cedar and toasty herb notes that lead to ripe but firm tannins. Best after 2011. 1,150 cases made. —*T.F.*

### **ROCCA Merlot Yountville Grigsby Vineyard 2007 Score: 90 | \$45**

Sleek and beautifully structured, with currant and cedar aromas and complex flavors of cherry, pencil lead and toasty sage, finishing with firm but ripe tannins. Best from 2012 through 2016. 115 cases made. —*T.F.*

### **SEBASTIANI Merlot Alexander Valley 2007 Score: 90 | \$24**

Sleek and focused, with black cherry and toasty mocha aromas and supple, layered currant and spicy sage flavors that finish with balanced tannins. Drink now through 2014. 1,630 cases made. —*T.F.*

### **PRIDE Merlot Sonoma County Vintner Select Cuvée 2007 Score: 89 | \$75**

Sleek and nicely focused, with toasty black cherry aromas and layered currant and tomato-leaf flavors. Finishes with a note of spice to the tannins. Drink now through 2015. 445 cases made. —*T.F.*

### **ST. CLEMENT Merlot Napa Valley 2007 Score: 89 | \$28**

Zesty and focused, with toasty mocha and plum aromas and ripe, layered flavors of currant and spicy oak that finish with ripe but firm tannins. Drink now through 2015. 1,557 cases made. —*T.F.*

### **TITUS Merlot Napa Valley 2007 Score: 89 | \$32**

Focused and lively, with currant and toasty cedar aromas and supple cherry and spice flavors that linger toward dry tannins. Drink now through 2014. 406 cases made. —*T.F.*

### **WATERSTONE Merlot Napa Valley 2007 Score: 88 | \$18**

Sleek and supple, with currant and toasty vanilla aromas and modestly structured cherry, sage and tomato-leaf flavors that finish with ripe but firm tannins. Drink now through 2014. 1,404 cases made. —*T.F.*

### **ST. FRANCIS Merlot Sonoma County 2007 Score: 87 | \$22**

A zesty Merlot, offering only modest complexity but plenty of spice and toasty dill, with black cherry and plum flavors. Drink now through 2014. 45,000 cases made. —*T.F.*