

Steve Heimoff



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More value wines, in this case, Editor's Choices

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Posted by *steve* on Oct 9, 2012 in *100 Point system, Prices, Tasting, Wine Critic* | [2 comments](#)

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Yesterday I wrote about Best Buy wines on the market now. Best Buys are defined rather strictly by [Wine Enthusiast](#) according to a price-score relationship. For example, if a wine scores 87 points and costs no more than \$12, it automatically gets a Best Buy designation. The editor (in this case, me) has no discretion in the matter. It's all in the numbers.

We also have another class of special designation called Editor's Choice. This is where we editors can apply our discernment and judgment. The guidelines for Editor's Choice are "wines that represent excellent quality at a price above our Best Buy range, or wines that merit special attention whether for quality or uniqueness regardless of price."

This obviously opens up a whole world of possibilities. It would be easy, I suppose, to overdo the Editor's Choice selections, since the parameters are so loose as to be almost subjective. But I've found, over the years, that I'm pretty selective about it. I don't want my Editor's Choices to seem promiscuously chosen, or selected for any reason other than that the wine really impresses me for something.

It's hard to say, in the abstract, why I choose Editor's Choices. A better approach is to use specific wines I gave the designation to and explain my thinking.

Often, even expensive wines can earn an Editor's Choice:

Failla's 2010 Chardonnay, from **Ehren Jordan's** estate vineyard way up at Fort Ross, on the far Sonoma Coast, isn't cheap. At \$44, it's pricier than most people I know would spend on a bottle of wine, except for a special occasion. But then, not every Chardonnay I review gets 99 points, which makes \$44 seem bargainsque, which makes the wine an Editor's Choice.

Ditto Von Strasser's 2009 Estate Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon, from up on Diamond Mountain. It's not the only Napa Cab I gave 98 points to. But, at \$70, it's a helluva lot less expensive than its peers, not to mention dozens of triple-digit Cabs that aren't even as good. That makes in unique.

Then there's the De Loach 2009 Pennacchio Vineyard Pinot Noir, from the Russian River Valley, which I gave 96 points. Seriously good Pinot, and the price—\$45—makes it a must buy. An easy winner for Editor's Choice.

There's another category that's not super expensive, but not cheap either. Let's say, from \$18-\$30. If these wines are outstanding or unique in some other way, I'll give them an Editor's Choice. For instance:

Arrowood 2009 Saralee's Vineyard Viognier, from the Russian River Valley, got one for its 95 point score and (almost everyday) price of \$30. It also earned the designation because good Viognier is rare in California, and this is a really good one.

This was a no brainer: Joseph Carr Dijon Clone Chardonnay, from the Sonoma Coast. 94 points for eighteen bucks? You have got to be kidding.

Another Duh! Editor's Choice was the Tangent 2011 Paragon Vineyard Viognier, from Edna Valley. 92 points, \$17. Can't beat it. In the same everyday price/high quality realm is Gainey's 2010 Limited Selection Sauvignon Blanc, from down in the Santa Ynez Valley. 92 points at \$19 is a steal.

Sometimes I give an Editors Choice just because the wine is offbeat and different, or I get the feeling it will be great with a vast array of food. Some of the Pinots and Cabs I rate very highly are highly specialized wines that, good as they are, are necessarily limited in what foods to drink them with. I mean, Harlan and Colgin and Verité demand foods with a high degree of sophistication and specificity geared to the wine's flavors and textures. On the other hand is a wine like Vina Robles' 2010 Red4, from Paso Robles (90 points, \$17). A Syrah-Petite Sirah blend, it's so versatile and elegant, if I were a sommelier I'd buy it. Production was nearly 12,000 cases—ease of finding in the marketplace can also weigh in on the Editor's Choice designation.

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One of the least expensive wines I gave an Editor's Choice this past year was the Sterling 2009 Vintner's Collection Syrah, with a Central Coast appellation. Thirteen bucks, 87 points. Hey, at that price, it would be one of my house reds (if I had one). High case production, too. It's a pleasure for me to be able to use my judgment and recommend a wine as an Editor's Choice because I know a lot of people will be able to use that information and benefit from it.



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2 Responses to "More value wines, in this case, Editor's Choices"



Jake Bilbro says:
October 9, 2012 at 7:58 am

No Zinfandel?

Steve, out of curiosity (not trying to be antagonistic) do you think that you're just not a Zinfandel guy?



steve says:
October 9, 2012 at 10:44 am

Dear Jake Bilbro, Actually I had many Zinfandels that were Editor's Choices over the last year. 18 to be exact, including Zins from DeLoach, Seghesio, Bella, Summers, Oakville Winery, Sbragia, Elyse, Francis Ford Coppola, Dry Creek, Frog's Leap, Decoy, Sausal, Plungerhead and St. Francis. I encourage you to visit the magazine's website at <http://www.winemag.com>, sign up for the free database search, and see for yourself!

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