

THE TASTING PANEL

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Super Star Rum

*Kenny Chesney's Blue Chair Bay
Is a Guaranteed Hit*

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: ANNE WATSON



Winery President Chris Hanna with Meridith May. See the story on page 34.

WINES



Robert Mondavi Winery 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve, Napa Valley (\$135)

From Napa's promised land, a flash of white pepper and graphite stirs the senses; the driest tannins snap and slap. Blueberry and cinnamon wake up a dense core—and dignity ensues. **95**

CONSTELLATION WINES U.S.



Chalk Hill 2009 Estate Red, Chalk Hill (\$70)

The nuances from some Syrah and Carmenère, added to this 49% Cabernet Sauvignon, 21% Malbec and 17% Merlot blend, help explain its amplified fruit and creamy violets on the mouth. Candied vanilla and a dollop of velvet-fudge fruit are wrapped in chalkiness, soon hijacked by a juicy plum protagonist. **92**

FOLEY FAMILY WINES



Patel 2010 Red Wine, Napa Valley (\$60)

This is Raj Patel's Right Bank tribute, a blend of 70% Merlot with some Cabernet Sauvignon and Malbec, with an inherent ripeness and a whoosh of juiciness. While the cherries and plums put on a lively performance, a dramatic curtain of mocha and maple sets the stage: there is not a dry tannin in the house! **90**



Carr Vineyards 2010 Pinot Noir, Turner Vineyard, Sta. Rita Hills (\$50)

From a 21-acre vineyard in the northern end of this highly regarded appellation, this Pinot proves itself quite a tart—cherry tart, that is. Lusciously painted with black pepper and spiced plums, the profile ranges from earth mother to a sensuously voluptuous milk-chocolate smooth operator. **93**



SPIRITS



RE:FIND Gin, USA (\$38)

Made at Paso Robles's only distillery, this artisan gin plays with seven botanicals but the standouts are lavender and sweet orange rind. A trace of black pepper shimmers on the tongue on the way to a blueberry finish. Distinctive texture and distillation from grapes (!) makes this herb garden

in a bottle amazingly alluring. **94**

PASO ROBLES CRAFT DISTILLING



XXX Shine Salted Caramel Corn Whiskey, USA (\$26)

Vanilla and nougat are one of my sinful passions and the nose on this spirit takes the desire further to a burnt caramel edge. The saltiness hits the tongue first, a shotgun of peppered apple turnover; in tandem. **90**

PHILADELPHIA DISTILLING




 Worthy of a smooch.


 French-style double bizou.


 Wildly infatuated.


 Seriously smitten.


 Head over heels in love.