

# *tastings* **BEYOND THE TOP 10**

At the beginning of last month the Wine Advocate scores were released. This World Cup of the wine world is also called Parker Points after the founder of the peculiar system that runs from 50-100. Many wine experts pretend to be beyond them, but the fact is that they influence retail wine sales more than anything else in the world.

This year a Vi Ranci gave it a try if you don't know it) from Priorat was the only Catalan wine to score a perfect 100. Like its fellow compatriots at the top of the list it is indeed a wonderful wine. But what about those a little further down the list? Let's take a look at a couple of them.

## **Can Rafols dels Gaus - La Calma 2010 €25**

In the world of Robert Parker, 94 is a very good score and this white from Penedès received the highest white wine score in all of Catalunya. So why mention

it here? For the simple fact that red wine lovers will often dismiss whites, myself included.

I was admittedly a bit sceptical of this wine as it's made of Chenin Blanc, which is a very nice grape—in France. But this is a fantastic bottle. It has fresh citric notes to the nose as well as a light, wonderful minerality. It's well balanced in the body and smooth in texture with some orange blossom notes in the finish. It loves to be paired with lighter meals of sea bass, chicken, or pork. Of course you could very well inhale the whole bottle unaccompanied if desired.

## **Venus La Universal - Venus 2009 €28**

While just one point below the La Calma and still high at 93 points, this score bumps the Venus to the second page and a bit out of sight. It's a shame really as this DO Montsant project of DOQ Priorat husband and wife legends, René Barber iV and Sara Pérez, continually pleases me.

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Year after year the fully organic Venus is one of the most wonderful bottles to emerge from DO Montsant. The aromas might initially seem like 'modern' DOQ Priorat with the fresh red fruits and black pepper but the body backs off a bit while remaining meaty, although not spicy and brash. Wonderfully balanced and well crafted, this is a great companion to duck and rabbit as well as to grilled meats.

