



Chasseur

Connoisseurs Guide Reviews

***** 95 Points - CHASSEUR Chardonnay Sonoma Coast Sangiacomo 2007**

If not the most complex of the new Chasseur Chardonnays, yet certainly competing for that exalted title, it is also a wine with plenty of zesty fruit, this time with a fairly round palatal feel complete with plenty of oily glycerin and more than enough supportive acidity to complete the balanced picture. Its stunning combination of depth, balance and richness continues all the way to the end, and if it drifts a touch more towards the big and dramatic than some of its mates, it never loses faith with expected Chasseur classiness.

***** 95 Points - CHASSEUR Chardonnay Russian River Valley Lorenzo 2007**

No shrinking violet by any means, "Lorenzo" nonetheless leans to a slightly more refined end of the spectrum while still offering all of the great depth of fruit and richness common to this lovely group of wines. Its creme brulee, lemon custard, leesy, ripe pear personality is both mouthfilling and balanced, and the acid that rises perceptibly in the latter palate is nothing more than the bit of bracing vitality that pulls this picture together. It is very good now, but it will achieve real grandeur if allowed to grow with a few years of cellaring.

**** 93 Points - CHASSEUR Chardonnay Russian River Valley Rued 2007**

Chasseur's Rued bottling is nothing if not ripe, but ripeness does not rule the "ruest" here because this is a wine built with high vitality and fresh fruit energy as its main and overriding themes. It is deep yet still nascent in character with a supple, oily feel at entry and a wealth of underlying acidity that speaks directly to its cool climate provenance. Like the Lorenzo bottling, it is one that will reward your patience.

**** 93 Points - CHASSEUR Chardonnay Sonoma Valley Durell 2007**

Joining the parade with a rich, creamy, vanilla/lemon creme top note and plenty of fruity vitality underneath, this wine is a fine amalgam of ripeness and richness with its own sense of boldness and crafting played off against each other. Pulpy and deep, with both sweet and quietly candied nuances yet nothing out of line at any point, this one comes closer to the Green Acres Hill edition in personality than to Lorenzo or Rued while still solidly in the familial embrace.

*** 90 Points - CHASSEUR Chardonnay Sonoma County 2007**

84% Russian River Valley; 16% Sonoma Coast. The suggested pricing of this wine relative to the other Chasseur bottlings would seem to indicate that the winery sees less to like in it. We, on the other hand, find it a great value for fans of Mr. Hunter's wines, and heartily recommend it to you for its attractive blending of ripe appley fruit, caramelly oak, roasted grain complexities and its somewhere more open, drink-me-now presence on the palate. Not every Chardonnay has to be able to age half a decade to be thoroughly enjoyable.

***** 96 Points CHASSEUR Pinot Noir Freestone Station Russian River Valley 2007**

Grabbing top honors among Chasseur's very impressive line-up of Pinots in 2007, the Freestone Station bottling is an altogether show-stopping wine that is at once rife with precise, wonderfully deep, ripe-cherry fruit and made even more attractive by its layering of sweet oak and spice. It is a big wine to be sure, but it exhibits superb balance and uncommon polish that serves as a high standard for all comers, and, while a delicious and wholly involving effort even now, it can only get better with age. And, here again, we see convincing evidence of the potential for the Freestone area.

**** 94 Points CHASSEUR Pinot Noir Sylvia's Russian River Valley 2007**

Picking a favorite from such an impressive contingent of Pinots as that offered up by Chasseur is a never an easy task, but fans of especially rich, highly ripened wines should not overlook this one. Nothing less than voluptuous, it is as finely balanced as any and stands as a fine expression of pure Pinot fruit with overtones of raspberries and violets and a sweetening splash of caramel. It is brightened by a keen streak of fine fruity acid, and it is built to keep for five or more years.

**** 93 Points CHASSEUR Pinot Noir Joyce Sonoma Coast 2007**

A good case in point as far as proving the legitimacy of terrain and terroir as important vinous influences, this Sonoma Coast bottling strikes a slightly different stance than its mates with a slightly tighter feel on the palate and good structure behind its very pretty face. It smacks of cinnamon and sweet cherries with wisps of caramel off to the side, and it shows a nice sprinkling of hardwood spice to its lengthy, comparatively firm finish. It is a wine best ignored in the near term, and it will pay dividends aplenty with five years of age.

**** 91 Points CHASSEUR Pinot Noir Blank Russian River Valley 2007**

Wonderfully precise and focused on very pure, black cherry fruit with notes of creamy, rich oak boosting its overall richness, this weighty Pinot edges to ripeness but stays in balance with lifting acids coming on at the end. Very long, very deep and very alive, it is still a touch tight at the finish, but its prospects for better with age are as sure as sure gets, and it looks good to go for at least another five or six years.

**** 91 Points CHASSEUR Pinot Noir Umino Russian River Valley 2007**

In all truth, this gutsy young wine strikes us as taking at least a slight bow in the direction of its well-ripened cousins from the Santa Lucia Highlands, yet for all of its deep fruit, richness and very palpable flesh, it tempers its swagger with an unexpected touch of finesse. Its fine spine of evident young tannins is not out of line for a wine of its richness and weight, and its finishing astringency presents no concerns when measured against the persistent and plentiful fruit that is certain to keep it on course for years to come.

**** 91 Points CHASSEUR Pinot Noir Holder Russian River Valley 2007**

With its intense aromas of cherries, raspberry preserves, vanilla, dried violets and dusty earth leading the way, this bottling pulls back just a bit on the palate with firming acids compressing its deep, but youthfully tight flavors. There is no question but that age is needed, and, given a few years in which to unfold, this one is destined to join its very handsome 2007 siblings at the head of the varietal class.

*** 90 Points CHASSEUR Pinot Noir Sexton Russian River Valley 2007**

Sweet and extracted in scent with a wealth of ripe cherries set against glimmers of spice and dark chocolate, this somewhat muscular wine is at once both fleshy and firm with a slight acid bite

coming on at the finish. It wants a few years to smooth out its rough spots, and it has the depth and richness required to make the grade with ease.

2007 WINERY OF THE YEAR

Some wineries seem to emerge from the womb and issue brilliant wines from their first day. Others take a more measured path. Our 2007 Winery Of The Year took the middle path. We can't remember many wines from Chasseur that were anything but attractive, and we can't recall any of Bill Hunters' 2007 releases that are not among the best he has ever done or among the best that anyone is doing. His Pinot Noirs and his Chardonnays are setting the pace these days as reflected by their frequent mentions in our list of our favorite wines below, and perhaps, more importantly, reflected in the rather astounding number of two and three star wines that have come from the winery this year.

*****95 CHASSEUR Pinot Noir Umino Russian River Valley 2006**

Leading with bright, perfectly focused red cherry fruit with hints of dried flowers and a dollop of creamy, slightly toasty elements, this fairly full-bodied, wonderfully well-balanced wine shows off the refined side of Pinot spectrum. Its deep, youthfully exuberant flavors blend in quiet but intriguing notes of dark and slate-like soils and promise to grow even more complex and sophisticated with five years or more in the cellar. It is hard to find Pinots of this impeccable brightness, depth and balance, but Chasseur has pulled it off.

***** 95 CHASSEUR Pinot Noir Freestone Station Russian River Valley 2006**

As if to prove that the winery can handle all sides of the Pinot potential, this wine is full and rich, deep and concentrated and simply loaded with sweet red cherry character. It is not overly heavy, but it makes a weightier impression than its mate above, and in so doing, invites service with substantial hunks of roasted meats from standing rib roasts to garlic-laden legs of lamb. And like the wine above, it is guaranteed to show great growth with bottle age.

****92 CHASSEUR Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast 2006**

Yet another wonderful Pinot from Chasseur, this one reminds a bit of the Umino bottling but with a noticeably sturdier under-carriage that asks for a few years of patience to bring out all of its enormous potential. But, the real story here is not muscle or mass, it is balance, because it is this wine's firm yet supple sense of balance that is going to keep it in good trim, and with a only a few years in the cellar, it will gain the polished poise so often found in Chasseur Pinots.

*** 90 CHASSEUR Pinot Noir Russian River Valley 2006**

If a bit more expressive in its aromas than in the mouth, this one is nevertheless very much on point as to precise red cherry fruit from front to back. It is slightly rounded in feel with good acidity and light but evident astringency and just a tag-end of finishing dryness from those tannins. Still, it is a very fine wine and wants only roasts and chops to show well.

**** 94 CHASSEUR Chardonnay Sangiacomo Green Acres Hill Sonoma Coast 2006**

If somewhat reluctant when first poured, this still nascent effort unfolds in the glass with straightforward apple and pear fruit to start before adding in rich and layered notes of creme brulee, pear nectar, brioche and hints of roasted nuts. The wine is full on the palate and beautifully balanced and echoes its aromatic beginnings with candied and pulpy fruit flavors whose depth and range come with airing. Be sure to allow this special effort a few years to fill out; it has plenty of room to grow and is certain to reward a bit of patience.

**** 93 CHASSEUR Chardonnay Sonoma Coast 2006**

This wine may only bear an "appellation" moniker but its depth and complexity lift it into the highly recommended ranks. It has more early openness in its aromas than some of the other efforts from Chasseur, and its oak, lees, solidly appley fruit and its pulpy, almost juicy demeanor make it one to drink while those other worthies find full voice. And, while aging is not needed, this one will hold up well for years to come.

**** 92 CHASSEUR Chardonnay Durell Vineyard Sonoma Valley 2006**

There is an extra bit of ripeness here, and it serves both to deepen the wine and also to add a slight bit of weightiness to it. Smells of fresh crushed apples, fully ripened pears and creamy oak jump from the glass, and those same attractions feature in the plump and outgoing flavors as well. At the finish, the wine does bring touches of heat and coarseness into play, but they are small bits of bother in a quite stunning effort.

**** 92 CHASSEUR Chardonnay Russian River Valley 2006**

Green apples and creamy oak make for a fairly classic beginning here, and the wine, like its brethren unfolds over time as its stone and chalk minerality gives in to sweeter fruit and increasingly rich smells. It is full in body and firm but not hard on the palate with long, vital flavors that promise more and better to come over the next several years.

****91 CHASSEUR Chardonnay Lorenzo Vineyard Russian River Valley 2006**

The most obvious and open of the Chasseur group, this toasty, leesy, fresh apple cider-smelling bottling mixes a blousy, open, high volume side with a bit of still tight, citrusy fruit. There is not a lot tight about the wine in the mouth however, and its pulpy, beamy, oak-enriched flavors flood the palate while also bringing both heat and slight bitterness into play. Be sure to partner this one with savory dishes.

***** 95 Points Chasseur Pinot Noir Sylvia's Dutton Sonoma County 2005**

From its deep and seamlessly fit aromas of pure cherry-like fruit and sweet oak spice to its wonderfully precise varietal flavors, this beautifully balanced bottling hits all the right marks and is a stunning display of real refinement and fruity depth. For all of its precision and polish, it is still a very young wine with plenty of room for improvement, and, providing that its considerable charms can be resisted, it will only impress more if allowed to rest for a few years. \$60.00

***** 95 Points Chasseur Pinot Noir Sexton Russian River Valley 2005**

Serving as something of a bridge between Chasseur's elegant Sylvia's and opulent Freestone Station bottlings, this lovely wine exhibits the best of both with its complex expressions of cherries and violets and perfectly fit oak. It is full and fleshy in feel with a terrific sense of concentration and just the right touch of tannin for structural grip, and, like both of its show-stopping partners, it is absolutely delicious right now yet will develop in bottle for a good many years.

**** 93 Points Chasseur Pinot Noir Freestone Station Russian River Valley 2005**

Among the several outstanding Chasseur Pinot Noirs, this is the ripest and most lush of the lot. It oozes with very sweet cherries and is just a bit fat on the palate, but it never once gives up to its ripeness and keeps its sights set on keenly defined fruit from first sniff on through to its very

long finish. If it is not as refined as the Sylvia's bottling nor quite as solid as the Sexton, it is still a great success in its own right.

**** 91 Points Chasseur Pinot Noir Blank Sonoma Coast 2005**

Standing slightly apart from its cellarmates insofar as its pushy ripeness brings with it a suggestion of dried berries and a touch of finishing heat, this bottling may wander a bit from the classic model, but it scores high marks for its compelling richness and depth. It is a substantial Pinot that does not sacrifice balance for size, and, rather than being heavy or soft, it is surprisingly well-structured and has room to grow.

***** 96 Points 2005 Chasseur Chardonnay Sangiacomo Green Acres Hill Sonoma Coast**

Very reliant on winemaking complexities for its extraordinary sense of range, this deeply fruity effort has a full-bodied, mouthfilling feel on the palate yet is so impeccably balanced that it also matches the long-aging potential of Chasseur's Lorenzo bottling without giving up any of the ready, come-hither approach that is the hallmark of the Twin Hill edition. In short, this one comes as close to capturing the best that California has to offer in Chardonnay.

**** 93 Points 2005 Chasseur Chardonnay Twin Hill Ranch Sonoma Coast**

This wine delivers a slightly sweeter brand of apple fruit along with a slightly elevated sense of ripeness and all the other deluxe trappings that are so integral to the wildly successful Chasseur approach to Chardonnay. It is supple and rounded and is more open and accessible than the Green Acres Hill but at no point does it lose out to heaviness and excess. It will pair up deliciously with rich salmon and swordfish dishes.

**** 92 Points 2005 Chasseur Chardonnay Lorenzo Vineyard Russian River Valley**

Starting with complexing notes of roasted grains and showing a very deep and streamlined fruity note, the nose of this generous yet still developing youngster only partially prepares one for the stunning balance and depth of the wine on the palate. It has all the sweet, juicy fruit expected of the best of its appellation, and it backs it up with the richness of creme brulee and citrus blossom in flavors and aftertaste of amazing length. Withal, it is destined for better things some two years hence and seems likely to hold over twice that time and more.

**** 91 Points 2005 Chasseur Chardonnay Durell Vineyard Sonoma Valley**

The biggest, fullest, most obviously extracted of the expressive Chasseur offerings, it will prove to be enormously rewarding to those who want their Chardonnays to be crafted with riveting drama and palate weight. Its butter and cream first impressions are filled out by fat, pulpy fruit that crosses the line from apple into peachy and carries unmistakable oaky spice at every turn. It may be a bit much for us mere mortals, however, and we should pay heed to the warnings of excess.

***** 95 Points Chasseur Durell Sonoma Coast 2004 Chardonnay**

Vying with the Sangiacomo Green Acres Hill for bragging rights as Chasseur's very best effort, this powerful, amazingly concentrated wine tempers its wealth of wonderfully juicy fruit with an equal measure of very sweet and mildly spicy oak. It is fleshy, full-bodied and absolutely mouthfilling in feel, and yet it is sparked by perfectly placed acidity that keeps it ever bright and alive. It is wide open and ready to go despite having the ability to age for a few years, and it deserves a place at the table with such special-occasion dinners as richly sauced lobster or, more fittingly, Quail Chasseur.

***** 96 Points Chasseur Sangiacomo Green Acres Hill 2004 Chardonnay**

Among the richest and most impressively filled of the Chasseur Chardonnays, or those from any other producer for that matter, this immense and altogether compelling wine is fit with layer upon layer of ripe apples, creamy oak, minerals and complexing lees, and it maintains a remarkable sense of energy from beginning to end. Its slight touch of finishing heat is made moot by its enveloping richness, its fruity concentration and its unequaled depth, and, as completely riveting as it may be at the moment, it has all the pieces in place for several more years of increasing improvement.

**** 94 Points Chasseur Lorenzo Russian River Valley 2004 Chardonnay**

Rich oak, a bit of lees and a touch of minerals are intertwined with the nicely defined and well-concentrated fruit of this fleshy and full-bodied working, and the wine tempers its tantalizing impressions of succulence with just the right measure of firming acidity. If perhaps a shade less layered and a little more direct than the highest scoring of its cellarmates, it is still a remarkably generous Chardonnay that is well worth seeking out, and it is comfortably counted among the many remarkable, very high-achieving wines of Chasseur.

**** 92 Pts. Chasseur Russian River Valley 2004 Chardonnay**

If anything a deeper and even more concentrated wine than its partner from the Sonoma Coast, this richly fruited Chardonnay is absolutely brimming with oak-sweetened apples and sports an uncommon marriage of potency and very fine balance. It is full and fleshy in feel, and its richness is sustained through an exceptionally long and flavorful finish. Like its siblings, it is sure to grow better with time, but it offers so much to like at present that we find it easy enough to side with those whose attitude is "patience be damned".

*** 90 Pts. Chasseur Twin Hill Sonoma Coast 2004 Chardonnay**

With its very deep and impressively extracted aromas of fully-ripened fruit, minerals and lavish oak, there is little choice from between this wine and any one of several of its similarly well-endowed siblings, but it is by comparison a touch abbreviated on the palate and shows its heat a little more than its mates. It will certainly find smoothing when matched up with the richer foods that its entire clan requires, but its slight raggedness costs it a second star.

*** 90 Pts. Chasseur Sonoma Coast 2004 Chardonnay**

Very much showing the rich and extracted style that seems the signature stamp of the current crop of Chasseur Chardonnays, this fleshy, full-bodied offering marries lots of pulpy, fully ripe fruit with a wealth of creamy oak and finds a subtle suggestion of minerals running its length. For all of its considerable size, it is very well-balanced and avoids any impression of heaviness. Its power impresses now, but its structure makes it one to set aside for a couple of years.

**** 93 Pts. Chasseur Frestone Station Russian River Valley 2004 Pinot Noir**

Deep and incisive varietal fruit leads the way at every point of this rich and genuinely juicy wine while creamy oak and glints of vanillin spice sweeten the mix. As with nearly all of the Chasseur bottlings, it is never overly beholden to ripeness, and its altogether impeccable balance and stunning length make it our favorite of a very good lot. Patient collectors can expect upwards of three to five years of improvement, but it is simply so delicious now that waiting much longer will prove a real challenge.

**** 92 Pts. Chasseur Sylvia's Russian River Valley 2004 Pinot Noir**

Although a little less outgoing in the nose than the rest of the bunch from Chasseur, this youthful, well-focused Pinot Noir is anything but withdrawn in the mouth. Its deep and full-scaled flavors are simply jam-packed with concentrated cherries, and it takes on added richness from its generous appointment of sweet oak. For all of its considerable ripeness and size, it remains very pure in fruit, and, as utterly tasty as it is at the moment, it can only get better with time.

*** 90 Pts. Chasseur Joyce Sonoma Coast 2004 Pinot Noir**

Bare wisps of varietally typical brushiness sit to the rear of lots of very rich, ripe-cherry fruitiness and sweet, caramelly oak in both the aromas and flavors of this very deep, keenly defined Pinot and lend a twist of difference between this wine and its cellarmates from Chasseur. Full, fleshy and supple in feel, it is firmed by integral acidity and offers lots of immediate appeal as well as the promise for better with age.

**** 91 Pts. Chasseur Sonoma Coast 2004 Pinot Noir**

The only problem we can see with the several very successful Chasseur Pinot Noirs is one of limited supply. That said, this very deep and generously fruited rendition has the richness and real range that makes its finding wholly worthwhile. Creamy, vanilla bean spice enriches its every aspect while unstinting cherry is fruit leads the way, and the wine is at once neatly balanced and wonderfully succulent all the way through to a very long and layered finish.

**** 91 Pts. Chasseur Russian River Valley 2004 Pinot Noir**

On the one hand possessing the pure cherry-like qualities that are particular to Russian River Pinot, this wine runs to ripeness and allows an extra bit of alcohol to show through at the end. It is so rich in extract, however, as to easily swallow its heat, and its prevailing motif is one of concentrated, keenly varietal fruit. As ripe as it is, it is also surprisingly well-balanced, and there is reason enough to believe that it will become more complex and expansive with additional age.

**** 91 Pts. Chasseur Lorenzo Russian River Valley 2002 Chardonnay**

Exhibiting just a shade of haziness in the glass, this bright, deep and energetic effort focuses on ripe gala apples in its handsomely cast aromas before turning to richer notes of caramel and creme brulee. It is fairly full in weight and somewhat fleshy in feel yet is always in balance both in palate and feel and in its mix of ripe fruit and lively acids. Complex and rich all the way to the end. It will work well with tasty shellfish dishes.

**** 91 Pts. Chasseur Durell Sonoma Valley 2002 Chardonnay**

All of the Chasseur Chardonnays exhibit ample ripeness, plenty of lees and unstinting oak, but this bottling joins the “Lorenzo” in matching its winemaking richness with equally evident fruit and thus comes up a bit more complete than most of its mates. Big broad and wonderfully mouthfilling in feel, it is a powerful wine that shows layer upon layer of caramel, vanilla, toast and ripe apples, and it very clearly needs drinking with appropriately full-flavored foods.

*** 90 Pts. Chasseur Russian River Valley 2002 Chardonnay**

Sweet smells of honey, graham crackers, vanilla and very ripe apples provide this one with recognizable Chasseur stamp of richness, but, in the mouth, the wine is slightly brighter and a shade less weighty than the rest of its kin. Its straightforward flavors of apples and cream are trimmed with a crisping touch of last-minute acidity, and it will find very comfortable use with simple chicken or meaty fish dishes where its heavier, oak driven siblings might fail.

**** 92 Pts. Chasseur Sylvia's Russian River Valley 2002 Pinot Noir**

Ripe, somewhat outgoing aromas of red cherries with a touch of a heavier black cherry component are nicely filled out by toasty caramelly oak notes. The wine is medium-full-bodied and has a slightly velvety feel on the palate while staying on the mannerly, balanced side of the spectrum. It is still developing and has the pieces in place to get better with bottle age and is well worth holding for two to five years.

**** 91 Pts. Chasseur Sonoma Coast 2002 Pinot Noir**

Ripe without overdoing it and favoring red cherries with a hint of dried berries, this attractive wine shares the well-mannered mantle with its mate, and if somewhat juicy in style, it is given over to rich and creamy oak as well. Moderately tannic and just a touch of hot in its otherwise polished finish, this one wants a bit of age but can and will serve comfortably even now alongside beef or lamb roasts.