

**Focus on California's
Central Coast
(As reviewed by Josh Reynolds)**

Kenneth Volk Vineyards

2010 Mourvedre *Enz Vineyard Lime Kiln Valley* (\$36) (made from vines that were reportedly planted in 1922; aged in a combination of French and Hungarian oak). Inky ruby. Dark berries, vanilla, muskyherbs and violet on the highly perfumed nose. Supple and sweet on entry, then tighter in the midpalate, offering intense cassis and cherry-cola flavors and smoky oak spice nuances. Dusty tannins come on late, adding grip to a long, smoky finish. Give this one some air or more cellar time. **90(+?) points**

2010 Zinfandel *Enz Vineyard Lime Kiln Valley* (\$36) Inky purple. Ripe dark berry aromas show a heady, vaguely jammy character and pick up smoky Indian spice and floral pastille nuances with aeration. Fleshy, palate-coating blueberry and mulberry flavors are complemented by notes of licorice pastille and fruitcake, with a smoky note emerging on the back half. Plush, warm and expansive on the finish, which clings with strong authority and smooth, even tannins. This flamboyant zin is carrying a hefty 15.4% alcohol, for those keeping count. **90 points**

2009 Tempranillo *John Smith Vineyard San Benito County* (\$36) Opaque ruby. Dried cherry, cassis and pipe tobacco on the fragrant nose. Spicy and precise, offering bitter cherry and rose pastille flavors and an enlivening touch of cracked pepper. Becomes sweeter with air and finishes on a gently tannic note, with lingering floral and spicecake nuances. In a pretty suave style for the variety, leaning more toward Rioja than Ribera del Duero in personality. **90 points**

2009 Cabernet Pfeffer San Benito County (\$36) Opaque ruby. Smoky cherry and cassis scents are complicated by notes of cracked pepper, fresh violet and a hint of cured tobacco. Chewy, nicely concentrated dark berry and bitter chocolate flavors show very good energy and strong spiciness. Closes on a sweet note, with dusty tannins adding grip and shape. This obscure and virtually extinct variety is most likely gros verdot but some researchers have proposed that it's actually a cross of cabernet sauvignon and trousseau. Most evidence favors the gros verdot theory so far - it's a grape that was popular in Bordeaux up until phylloxera but was passed over for replanting after the blight. The variety pre-dates cabernet sauvignon and merlot in Bordeaux by at least a century, by the way, as those two cultivars first arrived in the region in the 1850s. **90 points**

2008 Cabernet Franc Paso Robles (\$36) Brilliant ruby. Smoke- and black pepper-accented cherry and cassis scents are deepened by notes of sassafras and licorice. Shows very good depth and energy, offering gently sweet dark fruit and violet pastille flavors and a hint of succulent herbs. Nicely balanced and smooth in texture, finishing with just a hint of dusty tannins. **90 points**

2012 Verdelho *Pomar Junction Vineyard* Paso Robles (\$24) Bright straw color. Fresh melon, peach, mint and honey on the floral-accented nose. Supple and refreshingly dry, offering juicy melon and tangerine flavors and a deeper pit fruit nuance. Emphatically fruity on the finish, which shows a refreshingly bitter quinine quality.

88 points

2012 Chardonnay “Jaybird” Santa Maria Valley (\$22) Light, bright yellow. High-pitched citrus fruit and green apple scents, along with notes of ginger and white pepper. Taut and linear on the palate, offering tangy orchard fruit and bitter lemon zest flavors and a hint of succulent herbs. Closes on a dry note, with good clarity and cut, leaving a zesty citrus fruit note behind.

88 points

(www.volkwines.com)