

SPIRIT JOURNAL

Palate entry is whistle clean, sleek, and properly orange peel-like in its satisfying bitterness; midpalate keeps the sweetness tamped down in favor of astringent orange peel taste. Just what one wants in a triple sec. Ends lean, almost austere. Lovely and a triple sec that should be employed in high-end cocktails.

Spirit Journal Rating 2008:

★★★★/Highly Recommended

Joseph Cartron Ginger Liqueur
(France; A. Hardy USA,
Rosemont, IL)

18% abv, \$27.

Pale silver/pewter/bisque color; unblemished clarity. Smells zestily of freshly peeled ginger root; further aeration brings out more earthy, of-the-soil, and bark-like scents, including limestone, chalk, orris root, lime peel, and saffron; a well-managed, slightly sour aroma that is far more than a mere ginger scent. Palate entry is clean, lean, dry, almost austere and keenly stony/minerally; midpalate focuses more on the ginger spiciness and tanginess. Finishes mineral-like, chalky, with piquant tastes of white pepper and ginger pulp. Deals with the difficult flavor of ginger with all the competence one could hope for.

Spirit Journal Rating 2008:

★★★★/Highly Recommended

**Joseph Cartron Pomegranate
Grenade Liqueur**
(France; A. Hardy USA,
Rosemont, IL)

18% abv, \$26.

Cherry/brick/crimson color; flawless purity. Opening sniffs detect snappy, zesty, piquant aromas of black pepper, marmalade, and crushed pomegranate buds; the aroma gets fruitier and riper with aeration, but never overly sweet. Palate entry is juicy, tart, yet lusciously ripe and berry sweet; midpalate features an ideal balance between the fruit aspect, texture, sugar, and the crisp acidity. Concludes intense, concentrated, and scrumptious. Goes to the head of the pomegranate class!

Spirit Journal Rating 2008:

★★★★★/Highest Recommendation

Opera White Amaretto Liqueur
(Italy; Puglia, Inc.,
Waterbury, CT)

16% abv, \$17.

As this opaque, milk white/egg white colored liqueur is poured into the port glass, I can think of only how unappetizing it looks. I also think, "Why egg white?" Emits sweet, zesty, spicy smells of candied almond; aeration pushes the almondy sweetness forward; it's a fine amaretto bouquet that basically does all that it should. Palate entry is more sugary sweet than almondy and that's a bit of a bother since the sweetener shouldn't overshadow the featured headliner; midpalate continues the flavor profile found at entry. Ends sweet and one-note.

Spirit Journal Rating 2008:

★★/Not Recommended

Origine Liqueur L'Orange
(France; Origine Distilleries USA,
Novato, CA)

40% abv, \$34.

Topaz/amber color; flawless purity. First inhalations encounter delicate brandy notes that give off distant traces of orange peel — actually a tad too distant; the cognac aromatic dominance continues after the aeration period, emitting scents of oak chips, sawdust, brandy, pine, with just a hint of dried orange peel. Palate entry shows a deficiency of orange peel/orange pulp and that allows too much of the cognac and wood to come through; midpalate doesn't give the orange flavoring more of a chance to emerge and, consequently, the middle stage and the finish border on being too harsh due to the lack of fruit presence. I see where they were going with this liqueur, trying to understate the orange factor. Trouble is, the orange never gets off the ground with the rest of the flock.

Spirit Journal Rating 2008:

★★/Not Recommended

**Qi White Exotic Oranges &
White Tea Liqueur**
(USA; Qi Spirits, San Francisco, CA)

40% abv, \$42.

Appearance is 18-carat gold/eiswein yellow; superb clarity. Smells of per-

fumed, slightly sweet orange blossom and orange hard candy out of the gate, with scant evidence of tea; more air contact stimulates sharper, edgier aromas of orange zest/dried peel, giving this liqueur a roughly triple sec-like aromatic profile that I like quite a lot. Palate entry carries on the triple sec knock-off with tastes of tart, bitter orange astringency; midpalate goes more its own way as the tea component finally gets involved in a mellow, seamless manner. Ends up clean, not too sweet, not too viscous, and overall, while hardly profound, very tasty.

Spirit Journal Rating 2008:

★★★/Recommended

**Qi Black Lapsang Souchong
Tea Liqueur**

(USA; Qi Spirits,
San Francisco, CA)

40% abv, \$42.

Pretty tarnished copper/auburn/burnished orange color; flawless purity. Odors of burning rubber tire, smudge pot, burnt autumn leaves (typical for the tea base), Band-Aids, smoky, and mezcal intrigue, repel, and compel simultaneously; aeration brings out a burnt tropical fruit quality (grilled pineapple?) that somehow works well and suitably with the rubbery, raunchy, and musky wet leaves, mold, burning tire foundational scent; not necessarily my cup of, well, you know,



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but undeniably vexing because I kept returning to smell it again and again. Palate entry is intensely smoky, indeed, smokier than the bouquet; midpalate offers aggressive flavors of Lapsang Souchong, wood smoke, cigarette ash, and creosote. Might be liked by particularly avid lovers of smoke-bomb versions of Ardbeg, Lagavulin or Laphroaig malt whiskies. Recommended with the caveat that you read this review and properly digest it. Idiosyncratic to the max.

Spirit Journal Rating 2008:
★★★/Recommended

Vanille Royale Original French Vanilla Cream and Cognac Liqueur
(Ireland; Monet Importers, Miami, FL)

17% abv, \$20.

Chalky white, opaque, wet sand beige color. Opening smells are fruity, almost pear or apple-like, with touches of nutmeg and cinnamon; the fruitiness

accelerates after aeration as do the winter season spices, making for a bouquet that's friendly and familiar. Palate entry reminds me of white chocolate, with traces of almond, apple, and cinnamon; midpalate is long, coating, intensely creamy, and downright luscious.

It finishes rich, but not unctuous; creamy, but not like double cream; and spicy, but neither hot nor zesty. The fruit cake fruitiness lasts through the



entire 22-minute evaluation.
Spirit Journal Rating 2008:
★★★★/Highly Recommended

Villa Marzia Limoncello Lemon Liqueur
(Italy; VB Imports, Old Brookville, NY)

28% abv, \$22.

Pale straw/silver/cloudy lemon juice color. Engagingly tart, acutely lemony, and citric in the opening nosings; aeration maintains the acidity level and adds keen smells of lemon zest and fresh lemon juice; the real deal aromatically. Palate entry is sour yet ripe and lemony; midpalate astringency accelerates in the lemon juice department, leaving the gums tingling and the tongue fresh and clean. Finishes tart, juicy, and intensely lemony. A blast of freshness in the mouth. Excellent limoncello.

Spirit Journal Rating 2008:
★★★★/Highly Recommended

Spirit Journal retasting program

RETASTED VODKA INTERNATIONAL

Stolichnaya Vodka
(Russia; Allied Domecq Spirits, Westport, CT)
40% abv, \$22.

Impeccable purity; pewter tint. A burst of snack cracker (Wheat Thins) greets the olfactory sense with vigor and staying power in the opening nosing; additional aeration stimulates deeper notes that include metal/nickel/minerals and even a dash of tobacco smoke; I have always liked this nonsense bouquet; it says "vodka" to me. Entry is beefy, firm, big-textured, and drier than I recalled; the midpalate stage turns markedly sweeter as the grain element comes to the forefront as well as a charcoal/soot aspect which nicely balances the grain. Sturdy, sweet, sap-like finish. This vodka works for me on multiple levels.



(Original Spirit Journal Rating 1993:
★★★/Recommended)
Retaste March 2008:
★★★★/Highly Recommended

RETASTED TEQUILA - MEXICO

Herradura Silver Blanco Suave 100% de Agave Tequila Natural
(Mexico; Brown-Forman Beverage International, Louisville, KY)
40% abv, \$55.

Clear pewter; silver appearance; flawless purity. Vibrant herbal/earthy aromas of dill, green pepper, and mace are appealing right out of the gate; further aeration brings this already frisky bouquet to fever pitch as raw but sophisticated scents of hemp/fiber mingle freely with aromas of green pepper and tilled earth; wonderfully animated. Entry is intensely herbal and earthy, but keenly peppery and piquant; the midpalate is the picture of immature agave spirit greatness as the acidity maintains a high exposure rate, fueling the flavor push of brine, dill, soil, textile, and light spice. Concludes