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The Grapevine

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER FOR VINESSE WINE CLUB MEMBERS



MARTIN'S JOURNAL

Over the years, I've conducted hundreds of wine-tastings for people who already are "into" wine or want to learn more.

I always ask the people, by a show of hands, to rate each wine with the A-B-C-D-F grading system used in schools. Well over 90 percent of the time, the cumulative rating of the group will be lower than the ratings assigned by wine critics.

What this tells me is that the perception of wine is a very personal thing. The only way a consumer will ever experience compatibility with a wine critic is if their palates happen to be nearly identical, and in my experience, such circumstances are rare.

That's why I've learned to not only listen to our club members, but to seek out their input. You can read about two of our efforts in that regard in the accompanying cover story and in Katie Montgomery's column on page 2.

Martin Stewart Jr.

Your Opinion Matters, So Drink Your Vinesse Wine, Then rate-it!

By Robert Johnson

Why should only a few privileged wine critics be the only people who rate wine?

I've always felt that there's a parallel between wine critics and movie critics. Isn't it amazing how some of the most critically-acclaimed movies die at the box office, whereas certain films panned by the critics generate long lines at the multiplex?

Likewise, some of the wines that receive 95-plus ratings from the "Speculator" and the "Abdicator" (as I like to refer to two of the most frequently quoted evaluators of wine) are so tightly wound that they would not be enjoyable to the vast majority of people for years. And then there are wines that critics dismiss as "simple" or "too sweet" that consumers purchase by the case.

That said, why do we include ratings with the wines featured by Vinesse? Two reasons:

1. Our ratings represent the cumulative opinion of the Vinesse

Tasting Panel, so you're getting not just one person's assessment, but the combined experience of anywhere from seven to 12 people who love good wine.

2. Members tell us they like to see the ratings.

But when all is said and done, all that really matters is how *you*, as an individual, feel about a particular wine. And that's why we have introduced a member-empowering program to the Vinesse family of wine clubs: rate-it.

Now, you can tell us what you think about your club wines by filling out the enclosed postcard, or going online to Vinesse.com/rateit (no hyphen).

Our goal is and always has been 100 percent customer satisfaction

with every wine we feature. Given the uniqueness of each human palate, we know that's impossible. But we also know that the rate-it program will help us get closer to our goal.

Don't let the "Speculator" and the "Abdicator" have all the power – drink your Vinesse wine, then rate-it!



Robert Johnson can be reached at Robert@vinesse.com.



OUR MISSION:

To uncover and bring you wine gems from around the world, which you're not likely to discover on your own, and which enhance your wine enjoyment.

YOUR GRAPEVINE TEAM:

Intrepid Wine Enthusiast, Chief Taster and Winehound:

Martin Stewart

Chief Operating Officer (aka "The Buck Stops Here"):

Lawrence D. Dutra

Editor:

Robert Johnson

Wine Steward:

Katie Montgomery

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CHARTER MEMBER BENEFITS:

- 🍷 *The Grapevine* Newsletter
- 🍷 Premium wine selections at members-only prices
- 🍷 Wine tasting as a participant on VINESSE's Gold Medal Award Panel
- 🍷 Free subscription to VINESSE's Cyber Circle Community
- 🍷 Members-only savings, including *Food & Wine* subscriptions, dining out, gourmet food and tickets to the hottest events
- 🍷 Random giveaways of wine and accessories
- 🍷 Wine Finders Reward — identify a future wine selection and earn a reward
- 🍷 Perfectly matched recipes for featured wine selections



I haven't been this surprised about a pair of Vinesse Gold Medal Award winners since the honorees for Y2K were unveiled.

Since we write about the Gold Medal Award only once each year, let me begin with an explanation. Vinesse tracks the sales volume of each and every wine we share with club members. At the end of the calendar year, the two wines — one white and one red — that have out-sold all others receive the prestigious Vinesse Gold Medal Awards.

Vinesse members are among the most diverse, knowledgeable and willing-to-experiment wine drinkers in the entire world.

For a winery, the award is the ultimate compliment because it is decided not by one person (such as a wine critic) or a small group of people (such as a tasting panel), but by thousands of consumers who "voted" with their wallets.

In 2000, for the first time in the club's history, the awards went to wines that were not crafted in California: a white blend from Australia (the 1999 Trevor Jones wine known as "Boots") and a red wine from France (the 1998 Chateau Valcombe).

I loved both of those wines, but I have to admit that I was surprised so many club members shared my enthusiasm. With our various club programs, we try to present an array of wines for enthusiasts to try, but for many people, "foreign" wines can be an acquired taste.

In 2000, we learned that our members were growing not only in numbers, but also in their spectrum of wine preferences. That revelation, over time, led to the creation of new club programs, including The World of Wines and California Treasures. The idea was — and is — to provide wine lovers with clubs that match their individual preferences.

For 2005, the Vinesse Gold Medal Award winners are:

- White — 2004 Oro Penedes Muscat y Xarello.
- Red — 2000 Santo Stefano Cabernet Sauvignon.

So, why am I so surprised by these member selections? Two reasons:

1. One of the wines — the Oro Penedes — is from Spain, one of the worlds "under the radar" wine countries.
2. While the Oro Penedes is a sweet wine, the Santo Stefano is completely dry. In other words, the two winners cover a very wide spectrum of what I call "palate impression."

If it wasn't clear to me before, it's abundantly so now: Vinesse members are among the most diverse, knowledgeable and willing-to-experiment wine drinkers in the world. Here's to you!





TOURING TIPS

No trip to Germany is complete without exploring some of the country's wonderful wine regions.

Use your favorite travel guide (*Frommer's* publishes an excellent Germany edition) to plan your touring, and be sure to swing through a few wine districts along the way. In some cases, you'll encounter wines found nowhere else in the entire world...

• **Ahr** — This is northernmost and one of the smallest of Germany's wine-growing regions, with vineyards extending along the steep hillsides that line the Ahr River as it flows into the Rhine south of Bonn.

Most of the vineyards grow red grapes — Spatburgunder (Pinot Noir) and Portugieser — producing red wines of light charm and racy fruitfulness. Lively, fresh Riesling and Muller-Thurgau are the primary white wines grown here.

• **Mittelrhein** — Beginning just below Bonn and extending about 60 miles south on both banks of the Rhine, the Mittelrhein is a beautiful region of steep, terraced vineyards crowned with Medieval castles and ruins.

Bacharach has been the most

important wine village of the region since the Middle Ages. The clayish slate soil yields lively wines with a pronounced acidity. Riesling, Muller-Thurgau and Kerner grow best on these inhospitable slopes.

• **Mosel-Saar-Ruwer** — From just south of the ancient Roman city of Trier, north to Koblenz, where it empties into the Rhine, the Mosel River snakes its way past dramatically steep slopes covered with some of Germany's most famous vineyards. The wines of the Mosel and its tributaries, the Saar and the Ruwer, are among the most sought-after of all German elixirs.



• **Rheingau** — This is Germany's most central wine-growing region and home of some of the world's oldest wine families. It is located between Hochheim on the Main River and Lorch near the Mittelrhein, and it was the Rheingauers who first recognized the value of "noble rot" in making delectably sweet wines, particularly from Riesling grapes.

• **Nahe** — The Nahe's vineyards, west of Rheinhessen and east of the Mosel, thrive in a variety of soils along the steep slopes of the Nahe

River and its tributaries. Muller-Thurgau, Riesling and Sylvaner are the predominant varieties.

• **Rheinhessen** — Bordered on the west by the Nahe River and on the east and north by the Rhine, this 20-by-30 mile valley is the largest of Germany's wine-growing regions. Because of its varying soils and numerous microclimates, it is home to a wide array of grape varieties.

• **Rheinpfalz** — This is the wine-producing king of Germany, with its vineyards stretching across 50 miles of pretty, peaceful land adjacent to France and the Rheinhessen. Wine styles range from mild and pleasant to rich and intense.

• **Franken** — The easternmost of Germany's wine districts, Franken is the home of Germany's most masculine wines, typically drier and earthier than those made anywhere else in the country. Many of the region's wines continue to be bottled in the traditional green squat bottle known as a *Bocksbeutel*.

• **Hessische Bergstrasse** — This is Germany's smallest wine region, bordered by the Rhine on the west and the Odenwald Forest on the east. Virtually all of the wines are consumed locally.

• **Württemberg** —

Nearly half of this region's vineyard land is planted to red varieties, and as is the case with bottlings from

Hessische Bergstrasse, almost all of the wine is sold to local residents and restaurants. Its vineyards line the slopes of the Neckar River and its tributaries.

• **Baden** — The southernmost of Germany's wine regions, this long, slim strip of vineyard land extends from near Heidelberg in the north to Lake Constance in the south. This is Germany's Black Forest area, offering gorgeous scenery in addition to flavorful wines.

APPELLATION SHOWCASE

Sonoma County's Alexander Valley has a history of vines and wine as big and as varied as the landscape from which it originates.

Cyrus Alexander, for whom the valley is named, planted the region's first vineyard in 1846. A former mountain man, Alexander came to the valley in 1841 to manage Rancho Sotoyome for Captain Henry Fitch. As payment for his services, he received 9,000 acres on the eastern side of the valley. There, he built a home and planted a vineyard and orchard, using trees and vines originally obtained from the abandoned Russian outpost at Fort Ross, 45 miles away.

In the three decades following the Gold Rush of 1849, vineyards became increasingly common. H. Kier established the valley's first winery in Cloverdale in 1872, and four years later, Giuseppe and Peitro Simi built a

stone winery north of Healdsburg.

The 1880s and early 1890s was a period of explosive growth for both vineyards and wineries. By 1885, vineyard acreage in the valley had jumped to an estimated 1,500 acres, half of which was planted to Zinfandel. But the boom was over by 1900, as falling wine prices and the ravages of phylloxera took their toll.

Following the enactment of Prohibition in 1920, only two Alexander Valley wineries remained in business. The repeal of Prohibition in 1933 did little to improve the valley's wine fortunes, though some wineries reopened and a scattering of new wineries were established.

Alexander Valley's renaissance as wine country began quietly in 1956 with a single vineyard, the first to be planted in the region in nearly two decades. Vineyard development accelerated in the 1960s and 1970s.

In recent years, the region's wine industry has continued to grow and prosper. Alexander Valley's 13,000 acres of vineyards now supply more than 44 local wineries — and perhaps twice as many in other regions — with wine grapes of exceptional quality.



VINESSE STYLE



Vinesse continually proves that you don't have to loot the kids' college funds to afford a world-class bottle of wine.

But is the same thing true when it comes to cheese? Of course. With enough experience and sufficient searching, you can find wonderful cheeses at affordable prices.

This story is not about those cheeses. Rather, it deals with what may be the most expensive cheese in the world. It comes from Sweden, and it's made from the milk of... moose.

Yes, you read that correctly. In northern Sweden, Christer and Ulla Johansson make three kinds of cheese from the milk of their three moose — Gullan, Haelga and Juna. One cheese is similar to Camembert, one is reminiscent of Gorgonzola, and the third is slightly sour, a la feta cheese. The price: \$500 per pound.

Why so expensive? Because a moose can produce milk only five months out of the year, and no more than a gallon per day. Thus far, most sales are to upscale (obviously) Swedish hotels and restaurants, but the Johanssons are exploring export opportunities.

(You may now congratulate us; we made it through this entire story without one Bullwinkle comment.)

Grape Expectations: Know Your Varieties

Nobody ever learns everything there is to know about wine. Not even master sommeliers, who approach the subject as others approach graduate school.



Thankfully, one doesn't need to know a great deal about wine in order to enjoy drinking it. That said, a basic knowledge of some of the more popular grape varieties can enhance the wine-drinking experience.

With that in mind, this "Cellarmaster" column is devoted to providing some "talking points" about several varieties — including a number you're likely to encounter as a member of the Vinesse family of wine clubs...

• **Muscat.** This is the largest of all grape families, and virtually all renditions are made into wines that range from off-dry to very sweet.

Muscat goes by the name of Moscato in Italy and by Moscatel in Spain. In California, it's most commonly bottled under the name Muscat Canelli. And if you've ever had Asti Spumante, you were drinking sparkling Muscat.

• **Pinot Gris.** The best bottlings come from the Alsace region of France, which are floral, medium-bodied and well balanced.

It's known as Pinot Grigio in Italy and as Rulander in Germany, where the wines tend to be lighter in style.

• **Chardonnay.** The most popular white variety in the U.S., and also the white star of France's Burgundy and Champagne regions.

It's one of the few white varieties that melds well with the aroma and flavor nuances provided by contact with oak barrels. However, some believe that oak aging has lent a certain "sameness" to many California

bottlings.

Familiarity with the style has not bred contempt, however, as Chardonnay outsells all other varieties as a by-the-glass option at restaurants and bars.

• **Gewurtztraminer.** This is the wine to serve with spicy Asian or Southwest fare because of its own spicy nature.

The Alsace region of France produces the world's greatest Gewurztraminers, but a number of excellent versions hail from Germany, California and the Pacific Northwest.



• **Semillon.** This variety makes aromatic, rich wines, but it's often relegated to a co-starring role or bit part with Sauvignon Blanc.

It is one of just three varieties that can be used in the making of White

Bordeaux, and it's a key ingredient in France's decadently sweet Sauternes wines.

• **Tempranillo.** This is Spain's most important red variety, and goes by the name of Tinto Roriz in the Douro River area of Portugal.

It is the defining variety of the wines of Rioja, which most often are medium-bodied and sublime companions to food.

• **Merlot.** Sometimes referred to as "the poor man's Cabernet Sauvignon," it shares many qualities with its more esteemed cousin.

Merlot wines can be rich in flavor and smooth in texture, and because they are lower in tannins, they can be enjoyed in their youth.

Merlot also is used to "soften" Cabernet Sauvignon, rendering the blend accessible years earlier than a 100-percent Cabernet would be.

• **Pinot Noir.** The most "temperamental" of all wine grapes, Pinot can ripen unevenly within the same vineyard and even on the same vine, wreaking havoc during the harvest season.

But when talented vintners get their hands on perfectly ripened Pinot Noir grapes, magic in the bottle can ensue. The finished product can be silky smooth, seductively fruitful, and nearly as satisfying to smell as it is to drink.

• **Sangiovese.** If you've had Chianti, you've had Sangiovese. Ditto for Brunello di Montalcino.

Its acid level makes it an extremely versatile food wine, and when married with Cabernet Sauvignon to create a "Super Tuscan" blend, few can match it for pure sipping pleasure.

• **Zinfandel.** If there were a "state wine of California," Zin would be it.

While much of the state's crop is used to make the blush wine known as White Zinfandel, the red renditions are memorable for their combination of fruitfulness and spiciness.

American Cellars Wine Club



Many of these wines are hand-crafted gems produced by little known or small wineries. Or they are very limited production wines that the major buyers wouldn't touch because there simply wasn't a large enough supply. But they all are compelling wines, and ones the average wine lover wouldn't find anywhere else... unless they happened upon the winery... or were a close personal friend of the winemaker.

Each shipment includes:

2 or 4 bottles of the best finds from around the world
Wine facts plus detailed Wine Tasting Notes & Ratings
Vinesse Newsletter

Wine Color Mix: Reds, Whites, or Mixed

Frequency: Approximately monthly

Price: Only \$12 avg. per bottle + shipping

California Treasures Wine Club



This Club's featured wines all come from California. About half come from wineries in California's esteemed Napa and Sonoma counties. Others come from the award-winning boutique wineries of the Central Coast region — like those found in the Santa Ynez Valley or the Santa Maria Valley of Santa Barbara County.

We also seek out great wines from not so well known areas of California — like the Sacramento River Delta, the Arroyo Seco District of Northern Monterey County... even a small vineyard we found just west of Yosemite National Park.

Each shipment includes:

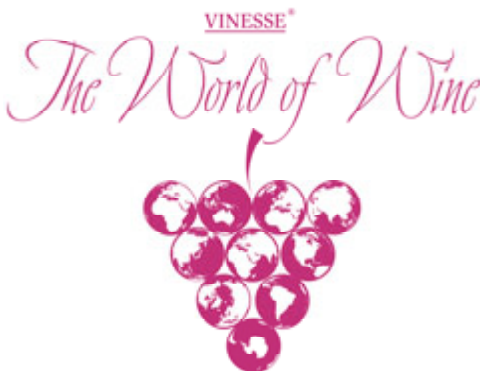
2 or 4 bottles of the best finds from California
Wine facts plus detailed Wine Tasting Notes & Ratings
Vinesse Newsletter

Wine Color Mix: Reds, Whites, or Mixed

Frequency: Approximately every other month

Price: Only \$12 avg. per bottle + shipping

The World of Wine Club



You're invited on an incredible wine adventure! The World of Wine transports you to six of the finest wine-producing countries in the world every year. Taste the most exquisite boutique wines each country has to offer... sample each country's rich winemaking history... and collect some souvenirs.

Each shipment includes:

6 bottles of specially selected wines
Wine facts plus detailed Wine Tasting Notes & Ratings
Vinesse Newsletter
Complimentary Souvenir

Wine Color Mix: Reds, Whites, or Mixed

Frequency: 6 times per year

Price: \$99 per shipment + shipping



Elevant Society

The Elevant Society is a connoisseur's service that provides super-premium wines. These are wines that may be cellared, but they are mature upon arrival, ready for immediate enjoyment. Such quality wines, of course, carry a higher price, and membership in the Elevant Society is not for everyone.

Each shipment includes:

2 or 4 bottles at a time

Wine facts plus detailed Wine Tasting Notes & Ratings

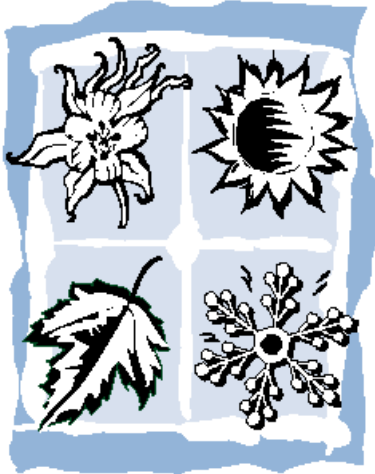
Vinesse Newsletter

Wine Color Mix: Big, Bold Reds Only

Frequency: Approximately monthly

Price: Only \$69.99 avg. per shipment + shipping

Four Seasons



Four Seasons Wine Club

Each Four Seasons sampler features wines paired for best enjoyment with the foods of that season — Spring, Summer, Fall, Holiday and Winter.

For example, our Summer Sampler includes four wines particularly suited for barbecues, picnics, or stand-alone summer sipping. Our Fall Sampler features specially-selected wines to complement hearty, harvest-time dishes. Wine “gems” from around the world, all specifically chosen by our tasting panel as the absolute best wines for the season. Each Four Seasons sampler also includes a complimentary surprise gift that is related to the season's wines.

Each shipment includes:

4 bottles at a time

Wine facts plus detailed Wine Tasting Notes & Ratings

Vinesse Newsletter

Surprise Gift

Wine Color Mix: Reds, Whites, or Mixed

Frequency: 4 times per year, plus a special holiday shipment

Price: Only \$89.95 avg. per shipment (shipping included)

Light & Sweet Club

Not every wine drinker likes their wines completely “dry.” Our newest club is just the thing for fans of “off-dry” (read: sweeter) wines. These delicate, delectable wines are a touch sweeter, a bit lighter — and for many people — more *fun* to drink. This delightful selection of white wines may occasionally sparkle, may occasionally blush with light pink and may tickle with a touch of effervescence. They will always be light, and kissed with sweetness. Your Light & Sweet Club wines will come from around the globe (virtually every wine producing region makes their own special rendition) and our Light & Sweet Club will bring them all right to your door!



Each shipment includes:

2 bottles of light & sweet wines

Wine facts plus detailed Wine Tasting Notes & Ratings

Vinesse Newsletter

Wine Color Mix: Mostly white — occasionally blush/pink

Frequency: Approximately every other month

Price: Only \$12 avg. per bottle + shipping

WINE FOR CONEHEADS

Dan Aykroyd, who gained fame on “Saturday Night Lives” and such movies as “The Blues Brothers” and “Ghostbusters,” would like to see more Canadian wines in the United States. Toward that end, he has invested \$850,000 in an Ontario company that owns four wineries.

WINE FOR DESSERT

No, we’re not talking about the sweet elixirs known as dessert wines, or the light-and-sweet wines featured in Vinesse’s Light & Sweet club. We’re talking about the growing trend of restaurants to include wine or spirits in their dessert offerings. “The cocktail menu is influencing the pastry kitchen more than ever,” observes Richard Yoshimura, pastry chef at Café del Rey in Marina del Rey, California. “I like to use alcohol because it imparts a really good flavor.” Among the best wine-infused desserts we’ve encountered is “Napa



Valley” ice cream with Pinot Noir and Merlot, a concoction of the Ventana Room in Tucson, Arizona.

WINES WITH BITE

A sweeping area outside of Yakima, Washington, is America’s newest viticultural area. The 68,500-acre region, dubbed Rattlesnake Hills, lies within the much larger Yakima Valley appellation. It stretches from Union Gap, just south of the city of Yakima, to north of Sunnyside, which is 45 miles to the east. What sets Rattlesnake Hills apart from the rest of the Yakima Valley? Warmer air temperatures, as well as its silty, loam soils.

A VOTE FOR CORK

A recent survey “revealed” that nine out of 10 consumers prefer cork closures over screw caps for their wine bottles. Not surprisingly, the survey was conducted on behalf of the Portuguese Cork Association. Our stance? Whether the wine bottle is sealed with cork or a screw cap, all we ask is that the wine is not spoiled.



IT’S THE CHEESE

What’s the best food to serve with wine? According to Pierre Androuet, “Man has yet to find a better com-

panion to cheese than wine.” While it should be noted that Androuet is a French cheese expert, his observation is valid. Wine’s residual sugar — even in trace amounts — counterbalances the natural saltiness of cheese. Also, wine’s acids help in the digestion of cheese. Virtually every type of wine can be paired successfully with some type of cheese. The most challenging wine to pair with cheese is a buttery Chardonnay because the “butters” can clash.

THIS PLACE IS GRRR-EAT!

Eastern Missouri’s Crown Valley Winery has added a bed-and-breakfast inn and an upscale restaurant. That’s not unusual. What is unusual is that the other attraction proprietors Joe and Loretta Scott have added is a tiger habitat. For lodging information, call 573-883-9909.

ALL ABOUT BARK

It takes a lot of oak trees to make a sufficient number of barrels to supply the world’s wineries. Of a typical French oak tree, only 5 percent of the wood is suitable for producing high-grade wine barrels.

QUOTE DU JOUR

“I like sweet wines. My idea has always been that when you’re young, you like sweet wines; and then you get sophisticated, and you drink dry wine; and then you get knowledgeable, and you drink heavy reds; and then you get old, and you drink sweet again.”

— Sally Jessy Raphael



Being Green

Responsible stewardship of the land is a fundamental tenet that has been passed from one generation of the Wente family to the next. One of the most important aspects of Wente Vineyards’ grape growing operation in California’s Livermore Valley is its adherence to the principles of sustainable agriculture. These practices, which the family calls “farming for the future,” include several innovative programs. Wente Vineyards’ cover crops are recycled into an organic fertilizer and soil enhancer used to create living soils — soils that renew themselves. Creative farming practices encourage biodiversity in the vineyards, greatly minimizing the need for pest intervention. These practices also reduce the chance of water pollution from runoff, conserve water and energy, and control erosion in the vineyards.



At Viader, Struggle & Survival Create Memorable Wines

“When you taste wine from a great vineyard, it has a distinct personality: a taste, a feel, a look — something that makes it different from any other vineyard in the world.”

So says Delia Viader, the talented winemaker behind Viader Vineyards, which is located on Howell Mountain overlooking the Napa Valley.

“This distinct personality, however, is the sum of a variety of personalities within the vineyard itself,” Viader adds. “Understanding and interpreting these personalities is the greatest challenge in the evolution of a great vineyard and the wine produced from it.”

The Argentine-born Viader came to the United States as a post-graduate college student. She holds a doctorate in philosophy from the Sorbonne University in Paris, and pursued advanced business studies at three American universities, includ-

ing the renowned viticultural school at the University of California at Davis.

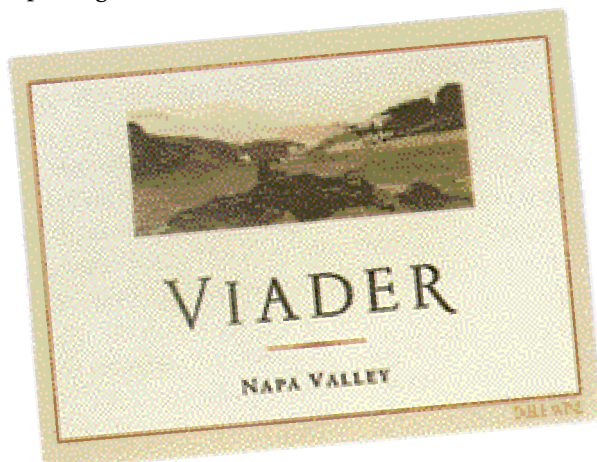
For her hillside property northeast of St. Helena, Viader chose a unique planting design. Rather than running the vine rows contoured in terraces, as is the norm in hilly areas, the vineyard rows run up and down the hillside with a slope of 32 percent. The soils offer perfect drainage, maximum sun exposure is achieved by the east-west orientation of the rows, and the vertical trellis system (utilized in most Bordeaux vineyards) keeps the small vines erect.

The vineyards are farmed strictly by hand with organic techniques. Viader does all of this to maintain the fine balance between struggle and survival, which results in grapes... and wines... of great character.

In a style reminiscent of the best of St. Emilion, a high proportion of Cabernet Franc (always around 40 percent) is used in Viader’s proprietary blend, which consistently is rated among California’s top red wines.

Viader also makes an amazing Petit Verdot-based blend dubbed “V,” and a Syrah that deliciously melds the spice and fruit concentration of Australian Shiraz with the sleek and fragrant nuances of Rhone Valley Syrah.

The Viader winery was completed in 1989. That building, as well as other structures on the property, features the very rock from the vineyards that is an integral part of the Viader terroir — terroir that comes to luscious liquid life in Delia Viader’s wines.



WINE A TO Z

Hectare. Metric measure of area containing 10,000 square meters, or 2.471 acres. Used in Europe to describe vineyard acreage.

Isinglass. A whitish, semi-transparent gelatinous substance obtained from the bladders of certain freshwater fish, especially the sturgeon, and used for fining or clarifying wines.

Jeroboam. (Mathematics aficionados will love this definition.) An over-sized bottle, the capacity of which is open to variation. In the Champagne region of France, it holds the equivalent of four standard-sized (750-ml.) bottles. In Bordeaux, it holds five standard-sized bottles. And in England, it normally — but not always — holds six. So, when ordering a Jeroboam for a party, be sure you know what you’re getting.

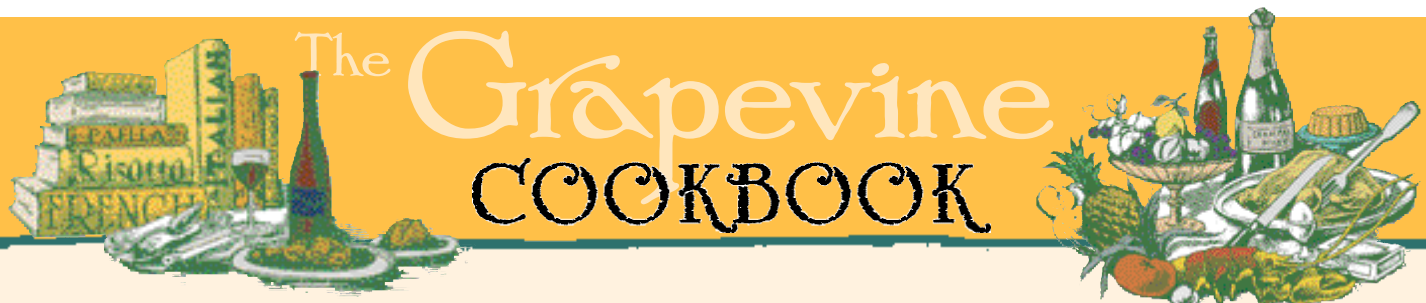
Kasel. Historically, the most important village of German Ruwer wines.

Livermore Valley. A California winegrowing region in Alameda County, east of San Francisco. Has successfully held off urban sprawl, and is particularly noted for its white wines.

Mulled Wine. Diluted red wine, brought to a boil, spiced and sweetened, and served very hot. Particularly popular at holiday time (and other parts of winter).

Noble Rot. A grape fungus which actually is a virtue in the making of sweet white wines.

Oggau. A wine town in Burgenland — one of the most important place-names in Austrian winemaking.



RIB-EYE STEAK WITH GORGONZOLA CREAM SAUCE

Try this recipe, which serves one, with an Italian red wine such as *Vino Nobile di Montepulciano*.

Ingredients

- 1 (10-oz.) rib-eye steak
- 2 cloves garlic, sliced
- 6 sprigs fresh thyme sprigs, crushed
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- Kosher salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- Gorgonzola Cream Sauce (recipe follows)

Preparation

1. In a dish, place steak, garlic, thyme and olive oil. Turn the steak in the ingredients a few times, and allow to marinate in the refrigerator for 1 hour.
2. Heat a grill or skillet with grill ridges to high heat. Before grilling, remove garlic and thyme from steak. Season well with salt and pepper, and grill to desired doneness.
3. Top steak with Gorgonzola cream sauce.

Gorgonzola Cream Sauce Ingredients

- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 2 tablespoons onions, finely diced
- 1 tablespoon fresh thyme leaves
- 1 tablespoon all-purpose flour
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 2 tablespoons Sherry
- 1/2 to 1 cup Gorgonzola cheese
- Kosher salt
- Freshly ground black pepper

Preparation

1. In a small saucepan, melt the butter. Add the onions and thyme, then whisk in the flour. Cook the flour for 1 minute.
2. Add heavy cream and Sherry, and continue to whisk. Bring the mixture to a simmer to allow flour to cook out.
3. After cream simmers for about 2 minutes, add the cheese to melt. Season with salt and pepper.

ITALIAN PORK CHOPS

This recipe, which serves 4, matches beautifully with *Pinot Noir*, as well as other red varieties and blends.

Ingredients

- Four 1-inch-thick pork chops
- 3/4 lb. plum tomatoes, chopped
- 3/4 cup red onion, chopped
- 1/4 cup red wine vinegar
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tablespoon fresh basil, chopped
- 1 tablespoon fresh oregano, chopped
- Salt and pepper to taste

Preparation

1. Combine all ingredients except the pork chops in a bowl. Let the mixture sit for about 15 minutes to mix the flavors.
2. Preheat grill. Drain the liquid from the mixture and pour over pork chops. Let them sit in liquid for about 15 minutes, then cook to desired doneness.
3. Place pork chops on plates and spoon tomato mixture over top. Serve.

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