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# The Grapevine

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER FOR VINESSE WINE CLUB MEMBERS

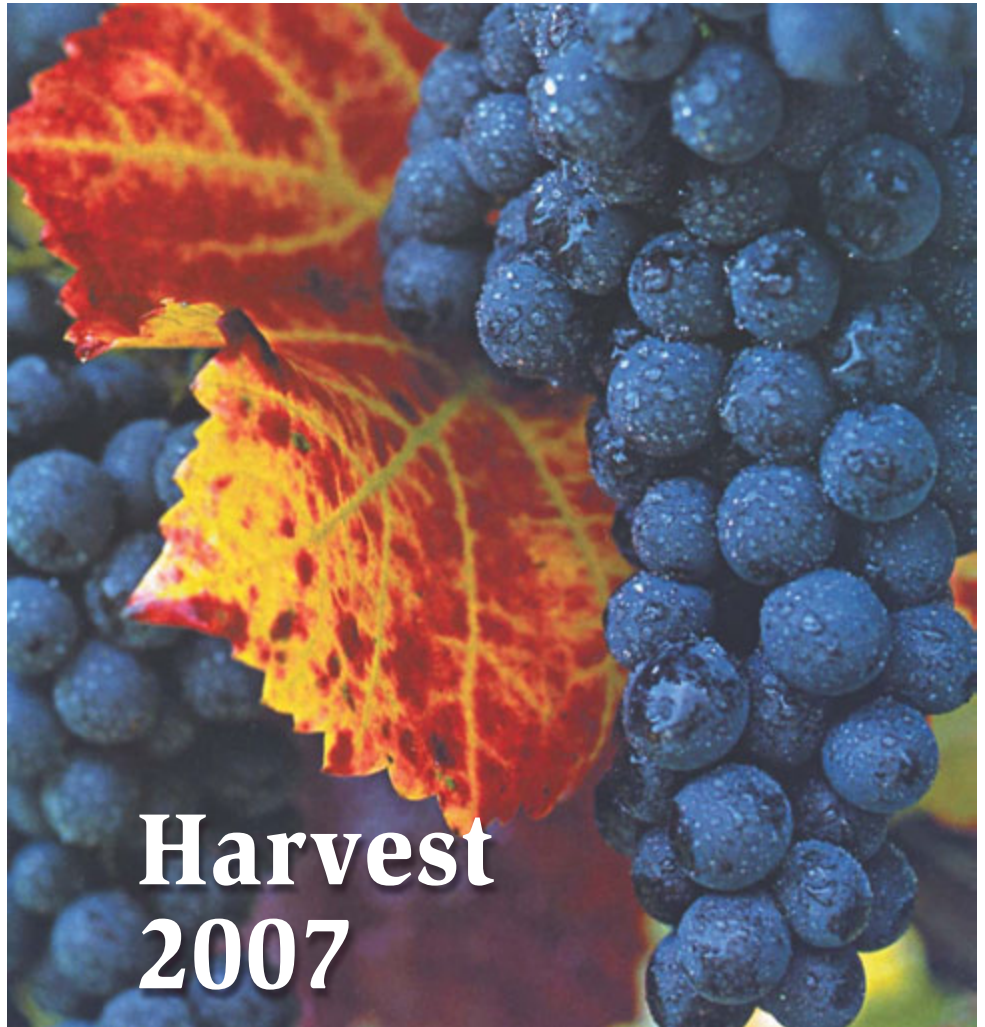
## VINESSE

# Hot LIST

**1 Hot Wine & Food Pairing:** Wine lovers visiting the northern Nevada gaming mecca of Reno should check out the Siena Hotel's Wednesday wine-and-food pairing sessions, which run from 5 to 7 p.m. at the Enoteca Wine Cellar & Tasting Bar. At just \$14.95 per person, it may well be Reno's best bet. 775-32-SIENA, or [sienareno.com](http://sienareno.com)

**2 Hot Hands-on Experience:** There's no more beautiful place on Earth during the fall or winter than Stowe, Vermont, and visitors to Stowe's Stone Hill Inn B&B may choose a "Fun for Foodies" package that enables them to be chocolatiers for a day at nearby Laughing Moon Chocolates. It adds a whole new dimension to chocolate enjoyment. 802-253-6282, or [stonehillinn.com](http://stonehillinn.com)

**3 Hot Alsatian Getaway:** Spend a week surrounded by grapevines at Les Petits Tisserands in Epfing, France, located between the towns of Colmar and Strasbourg. That's right along the Alsatian wine route, which makes this charming *gite* an ideal home base for touring and tasting. [Les-petits-tisserands.eu](http://Les-petits-tisserands.eu)



## Harvest 2007

As this special issue was going to press in early October, Mother Nature was keeping California's vintners and grape growers on their toes.

In the increasingly popular Paso Robles area of the Central Coast region, only about a third of the anticipated tonnage had been brought in, and the harvest was expected to continue into early November.

Farther north, in Napa Valley and Sonoma County, the crush was about three-fourths complete –

about as close to "on schedule" as it ever gets. Grapes were of exceptional quality, which means 2007 could be a "Vintage of the Decade" candidate.

Farther north and west, in Mendocino County's Anderson Valley, the harvest was experiencing starts and stops due to the weather, but the two Qs – quality and quantity – both were looking fine.

The bottom line: Virtually all of the harvest news up and down the state was good.

And that's very good news for wine lovers.

**Robert Johnson** can be reached at [Robert@vinesse.com](mailto:Robert@vinesse.com).

### HOW TO AVOID THOSE TASTING ROOM FEES

A lot of people think the reason so many Napa Valley wineries charge fees for tasting is simple greed. While greed is involved, its source is a small percentage of tasting room *visitors* – often traveling by limousine – that treated the wineries as a way of partying for hours on end. Many estates instituted tasting fees as a means of keeping the drunken revelers away. Fees also have gone from rare to commonplace on the North Fork of Long Island, a mere hour away from New York City, where no-fee wineries were being used for mobile bachelorette parties, and 3-ounce pours were being consumed as if they were shots. Fee-free tasting opportunities still exist, however. Most wineries will waive the fee if a customer remains sober, is polite and buys a bottle of wine.

### LONDON: NEW KING OF EXPENSIVE DINING

Tokyo long reigned as the most expensive city in the world for dining out. No more. It has been surpassed by London, where a meal and one drink at a fine restaurant now costs, on average, \$79.44. The cost for a comparable meal in Tokyo now is \$71.33. In fact, Tokyo has fallen to No. 3 on the Zagat-researched list, as the average price in Paris has climbed to \$71.88. How do those prices compare to America’s culinary capital, New York City? In the Big Apple, a comparable meal goes for \$39.22. Two things you can count on in all four cities: high-priced wine lists and consumer-unfriendly corkage policies.



### GOOD GRIEF! DO WINE & PEANUTS GO TOGETHER?

A fun way to break up a day of wine touring in California’s Sonoma County is to spend a few hours at the



Charles M. Schulz Museum and Research Center in Santa Rosa. The museum honors the memory of the “Peanuts” comic strip creator via displays of original strips, Schulz’s old drawing table and other artifacts. Visitors even can glimpse rare footage of Schulz drawing “Peanuts” characters, culled from a 1963 documentary.

Once you’ve paid homage to Charlie Brown, Snoopy, Linus, Lucy and the rest of the gang, you can resume your wine expedition, as there’s one estate that’s less than 15 minutes away.

### A PORT PRIMER FOR THE HOLIDAY SEASON

We tend to drink more Port and Port-like wines during the holiday season, particularly when there’s a chill in the air. While there are numerous approaches to Port-making, the three basic styles are Ruby, Tawny and White. Ruby is the most common type of Port, with a deep claret hue and rich, sweet flavors. Tawny has a caramel color, spicy and nutty flavors, and often is described as mellow. And White Port, as you may have deduced, is made from white grapes. It may be either dry or sweet, and usually is served chilled.

### PINOT NOIR’S LOVE AFFAIR WITH YAMHILL COUNTY

Yamhill County has emerged as the Pinot Noir capital of Oregon, but Portland State University geology professor Scott Burns dismisses the comparisons made with the Burgundy region, which is Pinot’s home in France. “It’s not the geology, which couldn’t be more different from Burgundy,” Burns told the *Oregonian* newspaper. “Over there, it’s limestone bedrock. Here, you’ve got marine sediment soils to the west and volcanic soils farther east. It’s as simple as this: Pinot Noir loves this place.”





## Wine Gifting for the Holidays

***F***inding just the right Christmas tree. No problem. Decorating the house. A snap. Figuring out what to do with the fruit cake you received last year. Challenging, but not impossible.

The holidays can be stressful for any number of reasons, but there is no more daunting task at this time of the year than finding just the right gift for your favorite wine lover.

That's because wine is such a personal thing. While a Big Mac tastes pretty much the same to millions of people, a bottle of wine will seldom be perceived by even two people in exactly the same way. We all have a pretty good idea of what the convergence of two all-beef patties, special sauce, lettuce, cheese, pickles and onions on a sesame seed bun tastes like. But ask two people to describe what a glass of wine tastes like, and the responses will range from blank stares and horrified expressions all the way to dissertation-like analyses of the aroma and flavor impressions.

For this reason, it's not wise to try to buy "the perfect wine" for a friend. You may have a pretty good idea of what they like, based on

shared dining-out experiences and vinous-focused conversations, but you don't possess that person's palate. A wine that is reminiscent of cherries jubilee to your friend may taste more like raspberries to you. So, don't even try to procure "exactly" the right brand or vintage to give as a gift.

Instead, focus on quality and dependability. Select a wine that you like, and write a note on the gift card that explains what you like about it. That's a much more heartfelt approach, and people will appreciate that you care enough to share a little bit of yourself with them.

A good starting point (and here comes the shameless plug): a bottle of wine from the club that you particularly enjoyed over the last few months. Call the Vinesse headquarters toll-free during regular business hours (9 a.m.-5 p.m., Pacific, Monday-Friday), and let our member service representatives track down that wine, or one very much like it, for you. They're always happy to help, and there's nothing they enjoy more than "talking wine."

And keep in mind that any bottle of wine procured through the wine clubs of Vinesse will be appreciated much more than a fruit cake. (Okay, that may not be saying much, but we're trying to maintain a modicum of humility here.)

P.S.: When shopping for friends, don't forget to pick up a few bottles for yourself. You've been good this year... haven't you?

## Quotes Du Jour

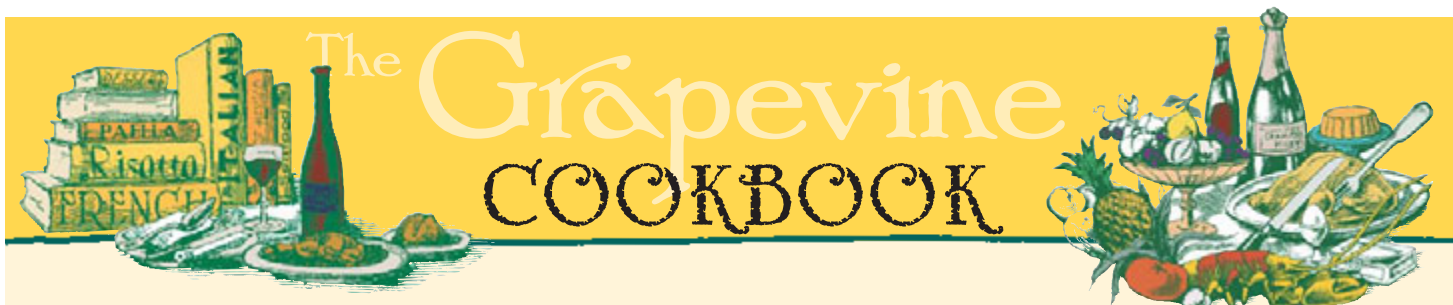
*All of the quotes that follow come from a recent USA Today feature on California winemaking legend Randall Grahm of Bonny Doon Vineyard, whose wonderful wines have been featured by the wine clubs of Vinesse several times through the years.*

■ *On rethinking his approach to winemaking, at age 54: "It's time to focus, time to buckle down."*

■ *On his old approach: "I was squandering my gifts. I want to make wine that makes the world better. Now I have to figure out how to do that."*

■ *On using biodynamics in the vineyard: "Biodynamics is about trying to find the individual character of a site. I'm really trying to produce more life force in my wines, and that changes everything you do."*

■ *On his "existential crisis": "You have to have the wit to figure out that piece of land and what to do with it. Your job is to reveal the terroir and not screw things up too bad."*



### **TOSSED TURKEY AND PASTA**

Here's a great recipe for Turkey Day leftovers or any time of the year. It makes 4 servings, and matches well with almost any white wine.

#### **Ingredients**

- 2 medium carrots
- 3/4 cup unsweetened orange juice
- 1 Tbsp. cornstarch
- 1/4 Tbsp. salt
- 1/2 tsp. dried whole basil
- 3/4 lbs. cooked turkey breast, cut into 1/2-inch pieces
- 8 cups water
- 8-oz. package fettuccine
- 2 oz. fresh snow peas, trimmed
- 1 cup small fresh mushrooms
- 8 cherry tomatoes, halved
- 1 Tbsp. margarine

#### **Preparation**

1. Cut carrots in half lengthwise; scrape halves into long strips, using a vegetable peeler; cut into 2-inch pieces, and set aside.
2. Combine orange juice, cornstarch, salt and basil in a small saucepan; bring to a boil, stirring constantly. Stir in turkey; cook 1 minute, and set aside.
3. Bring water to a boil in a large Dutch oven; add fettuccine and cook 7 minutes or until tender.
4. Add carrot strips and snow peas; cook 30 seconds. Drain well, and return to Dutch oven.
5. Add turkey mixture, mushrooms and remaining ingredients to fettuccine mixture; toss gently. Serve warm.

### **CREAM OF MUSHROOM SOUP**

This hearty recipe is perfect for those cold fall and winter nights, and makes 4 servings. Try it with your favorite Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc or white blend.

#### **Ingredients**

- 8 ounces mushrooms
- 4 tablespoons butter
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1/4 cup flour
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper
- 1/4 cup water
- 1 can condensed chicken broth
- 1 cup half-and-half
- Snipped parsley

#### **Preparation**

1. Slice enough mushrooms to measure 1 cup; chop remaining mushrooms. Cook and stir sliced mushrooms in 2 tablespoons of the butter in a 3-quart saucepan over low heat until golden brown. Remove mushrooms with slotted spoon.
2. Cook and stir chopped mushrooms and onion in remaining butter until onion is tender. Stir in flour, salt and pepper. Cook over low heat, stirring constantly, about 1 minute.
3. Remove from heat; stir in water and broth. Heat to boiling, stirring constantly. Boil and stir 1 minute. Stir in half-and-half and sliced mushrooms; heat just until hot – do not boil.
4. Garnish each serving with parsley.

*E-mail us your favorite wine-friendly recipe. If we feature it, your next VINESSE shipment is on us. Send the recipe to: vinesse@vinesse.com.*

**TO ORDER MORE WINE, FAX TO 805-496-4311,  
OR CALL TOLL-FREE: 800-823-5527.  
HOURS: MONDAY-FRIDAY 8AM TO 5PM PST**