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The Grapevine

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER FOR VINESSE WINE CLUB MEMBERS



MARTIN'S JOURNAL

Even if you made a concerted effort to avoid Gallo wines, you'd probably end up buying a bottle without knowing it.

That's because E.&J. Gallo Winery produces 75 million cases — 900 million bottles — each year under some 40 different labels, most of which do not prominently display the family name. Until Constellation Brands began gobbling up large wine estates, Gallo made more wine than any winery in the world. Like Avis, they still make a formidable No. 2.

You probably heard that the last of the Gallo founders, Ernest Gallo, passed away recently, just days short of his 98th birthday. While far from a beloved figure — he and brother Julio once sued another brother, Joseph, to prevent him from using the family name on his cheese products — Ernest played a key role in introducing California wine to global markets.

Like Robert Mondavi, he helped expand the possibilities for companies such as Vinesse. For that, we will always be grateful.

Martin Stewart Jr.

The 'Occasion' Approach to Stocking Your Wine Cellar

By Robert Johnson

There are two basic ways to approach organizing a wine cellar, even if that cellar is a closet.

Traditional thinking among collectors is to lay down X number of Bordeaux, Y number of Burgundy and Z number of California Cabernet Sauvignon bottles, then wait until they age to perfection before opening them.

That's fine for folks who have the time, energy, floor space and temperature-control technology to pull it off. There are far worse ways to spend one's leisure time than drinking nothing but in-their-prime wines.

But for those of us who do not have the time or space or unlimited funds for such an endeavor, a more pragmatic approach to cellaring wine is called for — an approach that emphasizes *drinking* wine as opposed to storing it.

This approach is known as "occasion cellaring." It involves keeping two or three bottles on hand that would be appropriate for a specific

occasion or occurrence or cuisine.

For instance, if Friday night is pizza night in your household, you should have a few bottles of pizza-friendly wine on hand. There's no better match for pepperoni pizza than a nice glass of Zinfandel.

If you bring home KFC on occasion for an easy family meal, Chardonnay or Pinot Grigio are good varieties to

have on hand. For spicy Asian fare, it's good to have a go-to bottle of Riesling or Gewurztraminer. If red meat rules in your household, Cabernet, Merlot and Pinot Noir are good varieties to stock.

But not every "occasion" revolves around food. Let's say an unexpected celebration is called for (promotion at work, good report card, etc.). Sparkling wine is the adult beverage of celebrations.

Might romance be in the air? That's another reason to have bubbly on hand. Tawny Port — with its toffee, brown sugar, spice and honey nuances — also has been known to ignite a fire or two.

You get the idea: Build your cellar around occasions, and those occasions will become even more special.



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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:

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Decanting has become de rigeur in fine restaurants, and many wine aficionados have added to their collection of wine accoutrements at home.

With many more wines being consumed young, rather than pulled from the cellar when they are decades old and absolutely in need of decanting, why are decanters so popular?

Christian Mouiex, owner of the legendary Chateau Petrus, says, "I prefer to decant wines, both young and old. It is a sign of respect for old wines and a sign of confidence in young wines.

"Decanting old wines, just a few moments before they are served, helps ensure that their clarity and brilliance are not obscured by any deposit that may have developed over time.

Decanting your wine several hours before it is served gives the wine a chance to bloom and attain a stage of development that normally requires years of aging."

Larry Stone, Master Sommelier and General Manager of Napa Valley's Rubicon Estate, is a firm believer in decanting.

"I view decanting into the proper vessel as an integral part of wine service and the enjoyment of wine," he says. "Old wines with a lot of sediment should gingerly, and with little disturbance of the wine, be decanted off of their sediment into a taller, narrower decanter with a small surface area. This should be done just prior to serving them. The idea is not to oxygenate the wine but to clarify it, improving the appearance and the texture of the wine by avoiding the gritty and bitter components associated with the sediment."

On the other hand, a young, robust wine — which may be muted in its aroma profile or "reduced" — benefits most from decanting into a broad decanter. "The enormous surface area of the wine in such a broad-based decanter allows for the maximum effect of oxygen on the young tannins and aromas of the wine. It liberates the aromas, intensifies the fruitiness of the mid-palate and rounds out the texture," Stone explains.

Adds Master of Wine Roger C. Bohmrich: "Decanting is not only helpful for separating wine from deposits in the bottle; an elegant decanter adds immensely to the beauty of the dinner table and heightens the expectation that the wine will be delicious."

Is decanting for you? Find out by

decanting a wine you enjoy often. Better yet, decant one bottle several hours ahead, then open and pour one immediately. If you see a difference in the evolution and enjoyment of the decanted wine, you may want to make decanting a regular part of your wine enjoyment.





WINE A_{TO}Z

Bouquet. The sum of the diverse, interesting and pleasing odors which a good, mature wine gives off once it is opened. On the basis of bouquet alone, experts can identify a wine's grape variety, place of origin and even its vintage.

Chapeau. Literally "hat" in French, the solid parts of grapes, skins, pips, stems, etc. that rise to the top of the must during red wine fermentation. It is broken frequently to distribute the yeasts, allow air to enter and promote color extraction from the skins.

Decanter. Glass carafe into which old wines are decanted, and in which young, inexpensive wines often are served. See Vinesse Wine Steward Katie Montgomery's "Cellar Notes" column in this issue for more on decanting.

Edelzwicker. Alsatian wine term, meaning a blended wine made from superior grape varieties. "Edel" is the German word for "noble." Riesling, Gewurztraminer, Pinot Gris, Pinot Blanc and Muscat are among the varieties used in assembling the blend.

APPELLATION SHOWCASE

PYRENEES, AUSTRALIA

The Pyrenees region of Australia shares much with its neighbor, the Grampians: beautiful views, fresh country air and many of the same foods.

Game meats, freshwater fish, honey and ewe's milk yogurt make up some of the regional fare, much of which is enjoyed in the local restaurants, hotels and cafes.

But the Pyrenees isn't just about food; it's also known for its wines. As one of the great wine regions of Western Victoria, a visit to the Pyrenees is not complete without a game of petanque at one of the vineyards. It's a perfect game for wine lovers: easy to play even with a glass of fine wine in hand.



While primarily known for its red wines today, the renaissance of the Pyrenees region began quite differently. It originally was selected by the French Remy Martin Group in the 1960s as an area suitable for the production of brandy. When the brandy market collapsed, the group looked to another area of its expertise: sparkling wine.

That first vineyard now is named Blue Pyrenees Estate, and in the ensuing years has been joined by some serious players, including Taltarni, Redbank, Mount Avoca and Warrenmang. Shiraz and Cabernet Sauvignon are the star varieties, but the Pyrenees also produces some fine Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc.

The gravelly soils, hot summers, cool nights and low rainfall are responsible for the distinctive flavors, great depth and instant appeal of the wines. Appealing wines from an irresistible wine region.



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VINESSE STYLE

DRINKING CHOCOLATE

A few years ago, with a marketing mega-blitz, Starbucks rolled out a drinking chocolate with a fancy name (Chantico) and a fancy price to match.

It turned out to be one of the few failures in the coffee shop chain's fortune-kissed history.

Now, as drinking chocolate gains a foothold in chocolate shops, cafes and other venues across the country, executives in Seattle are faced with a perplexing question: Was Starbucks' sweet concoction an inferior product, or was the chain simply ahead of its time?

Drinking chocolate has been popular in European cafes for years. Since much of the Starbucks "experience" is patterned after those very cafes, emulating another of their products must have seemed like a no-brainer.

It turned out that's exactly what it was, only not in a good way.

But others — mostly independent chocolate makers, cafe owners, et al — are picking up the sweet concept and running with it. And some are giving their gooey concoctions European-sounding names, such as *chocolat chaud* and *cioccolato caldo*.

The best drinking chocolate — think of it as hot chocolate for adults

— has only two ingredients: high-quality dark chocolate, and either milk or cream. The chocolate is melted and then swirled with about twice as much dairy product.

The finished product is sweet, but not anything like the sugared-down hot chocolate we typically prepare for our kids.

Some purveyors of drinking chocolate follow the wine model and use single-source (think: single-vineyard) chocolate. They may rotate the chocolates, or simply feature limited-run selections on a chalkboard. Just as the flavors of wine vary based on the sources of their grapes, chocolate from different locales will impart varying flavor impressions.

Cooks and bakers may add a pinch of salt or a splash of vanilla to enhance the flavors of their creations, and those same ingredients can bring out the flavor of chocolate. Some are experimenting with other ingredients, such as those flavored syrups we use to make coffee beverages "our own." Almond, mint and Irish cream flavors can provide particularly decadent results. So can spices such as cinnamon, nutmeg or even cayenne.

The "secret," however, is the chocolate. Cocoa powder doesn't cut it. Come to think of it, that could explain the lukewarm reception to Starbucks' hot chocolate for adults; it was made with a cocoa-powder mix.

BEING GREEN

Over the past few years, Napa Valley vintners and growers have worked together to develop a voluntary program called Napa Green, which enhances the watershed and restores habitat through a comprehensive set of sustainable agriculture practices. Currently there are 17,000 acres enrolled in the program, which looks at not only vineyard or farmed land, but also the roads, buildings, stream set-backs and non-farmed land of the grower/farmer. The program is being expanded to develop a code of sustainable and green practices for use throughout the winemaking process. The code will help demonstrate to regulators, distributors and consumers that certified wineries are implementing sustainable practices and protecting the environmental quality of the Napa Valley region.



Each Component (Even a Small One) in a Blended Wine Counts

Blending wine is part science and part art. But don't ask us to attach percentages to those parts; that would be pure conjecture.

The scientific aspect involves pairing only varieties that complement one another structurally. Determining how much of this, how much of that and how much of the other goes into the blend is where the art comes in.

Vinesse recently featured a wine with a varietal makeup of 70 percent Chardonnay,

20 percent Sauvignon Blanc and 10 percent Symphony. Mathematical logic tells us that the 10 percent portion would be overwhelmed by the majority varieties in the blend. Which raises the question: Why even include that 10 percent portion?

Because, as it turns out, even 5 percent of a blend can make a big difference in the finished product.

Mick Schroeter has been making Sauvignon Blanc at Sonoma County's Geyser Peak Winery for 10 years. Although the wine is 100 percent varietal, it's still a blend because Geyser Peak sources grapes from a



number of growing regions. For the 2006 vintage, the blend consists of 60 percent Sonoma County grapes, 25 percent Lake County, 10 percent Mendocino County and 5 percent Monterey County.

So why even bother with that Monterey fruit? After all, Sauvignon Blanc is Sauvignon Blanc, right?

Wrong. It turns out that the Monterey fruit plays an absolutely critical role in the finished product.

"It's all about where it's from," Schroeter says. "If it's a pungent green-bean, asparagus-juice parcel like the one we source in Monterey, 5 percent can have an enormous impact on the final wine."

"One year," Schroeter recalls, "we started our blending with the usual 5 percent from Monterey, but there was something that didn't seem to fit right. So, we took out some of that component — the 5 percent was cut back to about 3 percent — and the wine was perfect. There's a case where just 2 percent of the blend made all the difference."

Lesson learned: When you peruse the varietal make-up of a wine in the tasting notes we enclose with each bottle, don't scoff at those minority varieties. They could be providing the defining characteristics of that wine.

Four Seasons



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Chicago's State Street: That Grape Street

A little bit of wine country has come to downtown Chicago's famous State Street.

But before we tell you about the vinous nirvana in America's Second City, a few words from the Chairman of the Board...

"On State Street, that great street, I just wanna say: They do things they don't do on Broadway..."

What type of things? Well, how about putting three wine bars in a single one-block stretch?

Yes, State Street — home of the famous Palmer House, the historic Chicago Theatre and, since last April, the street-level news studio of the local ABC-TV affiliate, WLS — could now quite accurately be labeled, "That Grape Street."

The most famous of the three State Street wine bars is Pops for Champagne, which relocated to the River North neighborhood last year after 24 years in an area of the city known as Lakeview.

Pops' old space was somewhat cramped, whereas the new venue is sprawling. In fact, the new Pops



TOURING TIPS

offers two levels of bubbly bliss.

On the main level, a translucent onyx bar and multi-media chandelier contribute to the modern club feel. Only most clubs don't offer the amazing selection of Champagne and other sparkling wine, nor such a well-stocked raw bar. If the bi-level set-up creates a generational divide, this is where the younger "hipsters" like to hang out.

Downstairs offers a haven for music lovers, and because jazz is the genre of choice, the crowd skews older. The low ceilings and large stones provide an "underground" vibe that one nor-

mally must be in Europe to experience.

While Champagne is Pops' specialty, the busy nightspot also has a full bar and an American contemporary menu that includes numerous seafood choices. And the desserts are worth the extra 300 sit-ups you'll need to do in the morning.

If bubbly isn't your bag, perhaps you'd prefer the Italian wines and cuisine just up the block at Quartino. Or if Pops seems a bit pricey (and it is), be aware that the motto at Quartino is: "You can't afford not to eat or drink here."

The Quartino concept revolves around small plates, or *piattini*, of well-executed Italian dishes, artisanal cheeses, and meats that are cured in-house. The dining room features a *salumeria* station where the chefs slice meats and cheeses to order.

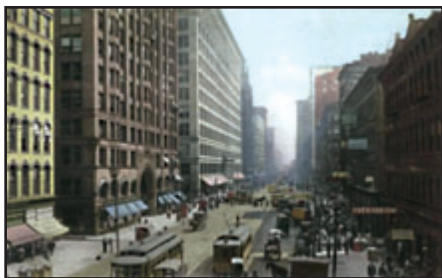
Chicago Tribune restaurant critic Phil Vettel gave the restaurant a rare three-star rating, and raved about such menu items as fava bean panino, roasted baby octopus, mushroom pizza, asparagus risotto and roasted mussels. For dessert, Vettel describes the profiteroles as "particularly impressive."

Amazingly, as good as the food is, the wine does not take a backseat. It's served in quartinos, the equivalent of about a glass-and-a-half, which is perfect for sharing and trying multiple selections.

The third point of vinous light on State Street is Osteria Via Stato, which is a combination restaurant and enoteca (wine bar).

The restaurant offers an Italian-style prix fixe menu in three courses: antipasti, pasta or risot-





This is State Street as it appeared exactly 100 years ago - with nary a wine bar in sight.

to, and entrée. The enoteca has a small-plates menu and also embraces the quartino size for wine, as well as a mezzeliter size, which is equivalent to about two-thirds of a bottle. The enoteca also offers three-wine flights under the menu heading, “Just Bring Me Wine.”

Within walking distance (even in the dead of winter) of numerous downtown hotels, this one-block stretch of State Street is a wine lover’s dream, providing the opportunity to enjoy three distinctive vinous experiences without the need to hail a cab.

Just watch out for those cabbies — some of whom seem to be color-blind when it comes to traffic signals — as you cross the street.

For Further Information

Pops for Champagne

601 N. State Street
312-266-7677

Quartino

626 N. State Street
312-698-5000

Osteria Via Stato

620 N. State Street
312-642-8450



Hess Collection: Art on the Walls and in the Glass

In the eyes of some, The Hess Collection could be considered a “winery of distinction” even if it didn’t produce world-class wines.

A distinguishing aspect of the Napa Valley estate is its multi-national collection of art, acquired over the past four decades by founder Donald Hess. The works, all created since 1960, are vivid, powerful and thought-provoking, and include bronze sculptures, oil paintings, video installations and interactive multimedia.

Among the artists represented are Andy Goldsworthy, Francis Bacon, Robert Motherwell, Frank Stella, Alan Rath and Anselm Keifer.

The collection is housed in a three-story winery building that was constructed in the early 1900s by Colonel Theodore Gier, the estate’s third owner. Founder H. Hudeman established his “Sprout Farm” botanical

garden resort in 1876, later adding a 12-acre vineyard. Rudolph Jordan acquired the property in 1884, renamed it the Lotus Farm, and was among the first to use cool fermentation and inoculated yeast.

Gier came on board in 1900, and over the next 29 years planted additional plots of grapevines. His wines won numerous awards in both American and European competitions, helping to raise the international profile of American wines.

But when the stock market crashed in 1929, Gier crashed with it. The next year, after struggling unsuccessfully to hold on, he sold his operation to the Christian Brothers, who had been seeking a site for a new novitiate, school and winery. The Brothers ran the winery for 56 years, until Donald Hess leased the buildings in 1986.

Six years later, Hess added 125 acres of vineyard land to his lease agreement and began a replanting project. That has been an exciting development for Hess Collection winemaker Dave Guffy.

“I have a strong belief in making wine in the vineyard — working each site to absolutely maximize flavors,” Guffy says. “My goal is to make ripe, fruit-forward, California-style wines

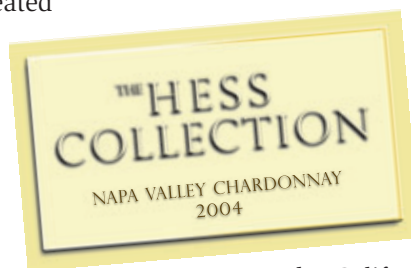
with both power and elegance.”

Hess Collection wines include a Mount Veeder Series, a Vineyard Designate Series

and a California Series. The Vineyard Designate Series is particularly popular among wine critics.

“We chose these vineyards with great care,” Duffy says. “The distinct flavor qualities a specific site can provide are celebrated in these inherently unique wines.”

At Hess Collection, you’ll experience art on the walls and art in the wine glass.



Quotes Du Jour

■ *Thomas Jefferson, third President of the United States and avid wine grape grower:*

“No nation is drunken where wine is cheap, and none sober where the dear-ness of wine substitutes ardent spirits as the common beverage. Wine brightens the life and thinking of anyone.”

■ *Pop music group UB40, by way of Neil Diamond, on the broken heart-healing capabilities of wine (sing alone if you'd like):*

“I have sworn every time / Thoughts of you would leave my head / I was wrong, now I've found / Just one thing makes me forget... / Red, red wine.”

■ *Wine writer Matt Kramer, on the allure of wine:*

“Ultimately, the appeal of wine lies in its mystery. Of all agricultural endeavors, wine extracts something from the Earth than cannot quite be explained.”

■ *King Edward VII (1841-1910) of England was ahead of his time in understanding the multiple contributions of wine:*

“Not only does one drink wine, but one inhales it, one looks at it, one tastes it, one swallows it... and one talks about it.”

Q AND A

Can you tell me which is better — a \$15 bottle of wine which is rated a 92, or a \$40 bottle which is rated a 90?

— **Ronald Sklar**

The \$15 bottle certainly is a better value, and those are the types of wines we seek out for the wine clubs of Vinesse. But that doesn't mean you should turn your back on a \$40 bottle with a somewhat lower rating. Any wine that's rated 90 or higher is among the best made in the world; some wines simply command higher prices as part of the free-market system and the law of supply-and-demand.

I have what may be a dumb question: My wife and I enjoy a glass of good wine every now and again, but often times, we can't finish the whole bottle. Is there a rule of thumb on how long a bottle of wine will stay "good"?

— **Bob Stansberry**

First of all, Bob, there are no dumb questions in wine. Well, okay,

there are... but yours isn't one of them. Wine can remain “good” for several days after a bottle is opened, but it will lose a little bit of its “punch” with each succeeding day. In some cases, a wine will actually taste “better” on the second day. (This typically involves a big, bold red, which may need extra time to “open up” and reveal all of its aromas and flavors.) In other cases, a wine can be lifeless by the third day. It's perfectly okay to put your bottle in the refrigerator overnight, resealed. If it's a white wine, take it out about two hours before you intend to drink it again. If it's a red, allow three to four hours for the wine to return to something close to room temperature. Remember, coldness dulls both the aromas and flavors of wine.

Have a wine-related question? Go to www.Vinesse.com/ask and ask away. We'll feature selected questions and answers here in The Grapevine.



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DRY CREEK VINEYARD CELEBRATES NO. 35

Through the years, the wine clubs of Vinesse have featured bottlings from Dry Creek Vineyard on several occasions. This year, the Sonoma County wine estate celebrates its 35th anniversary. Before David Stare arrived in 1972, the Dry Creek Valley had yet to recover from the effects of Prohibition. In fact, only three wineries were in existence: Pedroncelli, Frei Brothers (now Gallo-Sonoma) and Fredson (no longer in business). Stare encountered more than a few grape growers and landholders who were not happy about his plans to build a new winery. "We sort of stirred up a hornet's nest," he recalls. "Many residents felt that I was opening the door to commercial development in the Dry Creek Valley. My reaction was, if they didn't want wineries in Sonoma County, what did they want? I felt that my intentions were good and noble."



WINERIES MULTIPLY LIKE RABBITS

Everybody, it seems, wants to be a winemaker. In just the past two years, the number of wineries in the United States has increased by 26 percent to 5,645. That's as of November 2006. Given their rabbit-like reproduction, there likely are a few dozen more by now. The total does not include mead makers, nor wineries that produce

fruit wines to the exclusion of grape wines.

WHAT'S MICKEY DOING AFTER WORK TODAY?

Two new wine bars have brought some vinous pleasure to the city of Orlando. In the downtown district, the Eola Wine Co. offers approximately 200 selections. Meanwhile, the Wine Room on Park Avenue is a combination wine store, wine bar and delicatessen where guests purchase wine by the glass using smart cards instead of cash or credit cards. What it lacks in personal service, it makes up in convenience. To learn more about these adult destinations in the family vacation capital of the world, visit:

EolaWineCompany.com
TheWineRoomOnline.com

VINEYARD PHOTOS ON EXHIBIT THRU MID-JULY

George Rose, Vice President of Public Relations for Kendall-Jackson Winery, used to take pictures at rock concerts for the *Los Angeles Times*. In fact, he's a Pulitzer Prize-nominated photographer. From April 28 through July 15, you can view 75 of Rose's best vineyard images at an exhibition titled "The Art of Terroir" at the Sonoma County Museum in Santa Rosa, California. For museum hours of operation, admission fee information, etc., call 707-579-1500.

McINTOSH STEPS UP TO THE PLATE AS A VINTNER

Tim McIntosh began his Major League Baseball career with the Milwaukee Brewers in 1990 and finished it with the New York Yankees in 1996. It was neither the longest nor most productive of careers, but now McIntosh intends to improve on both marks as a winemaker in California's Lodi growing region. "We're making ourselves something to look up to," he says of the vinous venture.

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BARBECUED SHORT RIBS WITH ASIAN MARINADE

This recipe, which serves 6, makes an anything-but-typical companion to red wine blends that are based on the varieties of Bordeaux. If you can't find certain ingredients at your supermarket, track down a Korean market.

Marinated Meat Ingredients

- 1/2 cup soy sauce
- 3/4 cup Korean rice wine or mirin
- 1 cup pineapple juice
- 2 tbl. sugar
- 2 tbl. sesame salt
- 3 tbl. chopped garlic
- 3/4 cup chopped scallions
- 3/4 cup minced onion
- 1 tbl. finely grated fresh ginger
- 1 small Asian pear, cut into 1-inch chunks
- 3 tbl. Asian sesame oil
- 2 tsp. coarsely ground Korean red chile
- 2 tsp. freshly ground black pepper
- 4-lbs. meaty flanken-style short ribs

Other Ingredients

- 1 head red-leaf lettuce, separated into leaves
- Sesame salt
- 4 large garlic cloves, thinly sliced

Preparation

1. Combine all of the marinade ingredients in a food processor and puree; transfer to a bowl.
2. Add the ribs and let marinate at room temperature for at least 3 hours, or refrigerate overnight.
3. Light a grill or preheat the broiler. Remove the ribs from the marinade and shake off any excess. Grill or broil the ribs until cooked through, about 5 minutes per side.
4. Serve the short ribs with the accompaniments, and let diners wrap their own meat.

PULLED PORK SANDWICH

What to do with that leftover pork tenderloin? Turn it into a delicious sandwich, and pour a glass of Zinfandel.

Ingredients

- Leftover cooked pork tenderloin
- Water (to cover)
- 2 tablespoons cider vinegar
- 1/3 cup barbecue sauce
- Hot pepper sauce, to taste
- Hamburger bun

Preparation

1. In a heavy pot, combine pork with just enough water to cover, cider vinegar, barbecue sauce, and hot pepper sauce to taste. Bring to a boil, and simmer over medium heat covered until it pulls apart, about 50 minutes.
2. Remove pork from the sauce, shred and set aside.
3. Simmer the sauce until it reaches the desired thickness. Stir the pork in the sauce and spoon the mixture onto the hamburger bun. Add cole slaw, if desired.

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