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The Grapevine

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER FOR VINESSE WINE CLUB MEMBERS



MARTIN'S JOURNAL

When I was told that quotes would be a recurring theme in this issue, one came immediately to mind.

Actor Burgess Meredith was talking about his personal wine collection with director John Huston, and commented: "Some of these vintages won't be ready to drink for a long time. If we wait much longer, our kids will be toasting us over our graves! Let's drink up what we have, and let them buy their own."

We gravitate to quotations that mirror our own opinions, and that's certainly the case with Mr. Meredith's assertion.

I founded Vinesse to make wine enjoyment less intimidating and more accessible. One of the most confusing aspects of wine has always been knowing when a particular bottle is "ready" to be consumed. So, from day one, we've specialized in bottlings that need no additional cellar time.

We agree with Mr. Meredith, but we phrase his comment about wine in the form of a question: What are you saving it for?

Martin Stewart Jr.

He Said/She Said: Words of Wisdom (Mostly) About Wine

By Robert Johnson

"Healthy or rich," said Julio Iglesias, "I have drunk wine almost every night for the last twenty-five years."

Added the famous singer: "Sometimes a glass, sometimes a bottle, sometimes at a wine tasting. But always some wine, somehow."

We're not sure if wine contributed to Iglesias' reputation as a ladies' man, but it couldn't have hurt. And it certainly did not impact his voice in any negative sort of way, as it has been among the most easily identifiable for decades.

Because wine is one of my passions, I pay attention to what people say about it — whether it's a fan like Julio Iglesias at one end of the spectrum, or Mothers Against Drunk Driving at the other. This is America, after all, and we're all entitled to our opinions.

Apparently I'm not alone, because one of the most popular

departments in *The Grapevine* is "Quotes du Jour," and a popular click-through on VinesseTODAY.com is "Wine Wit."

It doesn't take a marketing genius like Martin Stewart Jr. to understand that a company like ours should give club members healthy doses of what they want. That's why we instituted the annual "Food Issue" a few years back, and that's why we're devoting much of this issue to what some notable people have said about wine.

And just to make it a little more fun, we'll be expanding on some of

the quotes within specific columns and departments in the newsletter. For instance, wine steward Katie Montgomery will add her two cents' worth

about the art of winemaking in her "Cellar Notes" column, while the "Cellarmaster" department will feature some quotes dealing with the health benefits of wine.

Now if only we could get Julio Iglesias and Willie Nelson to duet on an updated version of one of their big hits: "For all the wines I've known before..."



Read more by Johnson in "Editor's Journal" on VinesseTODAY.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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The Art of Winemaking

I'm one of those people who absolutely believes that winemaking is much more than a skill — that it's an art form.

Yes, a good deal of science goes into the grape-growing process. And some winery cellars have ultra-high-tech equipment that's used in both making and monitoring wine. These are absolute necessities for wineries that produce large volumes for the mass market.

But behind every truly great wine there beats the heart and — more importantly — the soul of a passionate winemaker. And the best winemakers I've met have the same types of talents and passion possessed by painters, sculptors and other artists.

Perhaps it takes an art collector to recognize this truth. Read and absorb the words of collector Norman Braman: "Invariably, when I go to visit other art collectors, they generally have a substantial wine collection, or they are at least very interested in fine wines. I think wine, to a large degree, is a work of art."

The best vintners, the real artisan vintners, have the ability to "visualize"

the aroma and flavor of a blended wine before the various pieces of the puzzle are assembled. It's not merely "a little bit of this and a little bit of that"; it's an instinct that tells the winemaker to start with a base of Variety A, then add about half as much of Variety B, and then to beef up the aroma, add a dollop of Variety C.

They may not hit a bulls-eye on the very first attempt, but most of the time they'll come awfully close. Then they'll start making minor adjustments in the blend — a little more of this, a little less of that — and repeat the process until their mind's eye is satisfied. I've been lucky enough to assist several highly respected winemakers in the cellar, and I've seen this artistic process unfold hundreds of times.

If you're more musically than artistically inclined, perhaps the words of symphony conductor Michael Tilson Thomas will ring true with you.

"Music is a psychological landscape, with all sorts of indefinable things," Thomas says. "Wine is the same way. It has tastes that are very hard to define. When I drink a great wine, I get a sense of breadth — it's like a chord sounding and echoing."

Whether it's a tune that you can't get out of your head... or a painting that takes your breath away... or a glass of wine that sensually satiates your palate... there's no denying the personal pleasure that great art brings us.

"Invariably, art collectors are very interested in fine wines. Wine, to a large degree, is a work of art."



WINE A TO Z

Trebbiano. A white grape of Italy and southern France, typically used as part of multi-variety blends. In France, it's also known as...

Ugni Blanc. The variety also is grown by some vintners in the Livermore Valley of California.

Veraison. The stage of a winegrape's ripening process when it changes color just prior to attaining its ideal sugar level and readiness for the harvest.

Weeper. One of many terms used to describe a bottle of wine that has a leakage problem due to a bad cork.

Xeres. The old name for the town of Jerez in Spain — a major producer of Sherry.

Young. Term for a wine — regardless of its actual age — that has not yet evolved to a point at which it's ready to be consumed and enjoyed.

APPELLATION SHOWCASE

RUTHERFORD

The Rutherford District of Napa Valley is tucked between St. Helena (to the north) and Oakville (to the south).

It's an area so tailor-made for growing Cabernet Sauvignon grapes that 70 percent of the vineyard acreage in Rutherford is devoted to Cabernet.

In keeping with this issue's theme, here's a look at what some prominent Rutherford vintners have to say about the appellation:

■ **Jeffrey Stambor of Beaulieu Vineyard:**

"The great wines from Rutherford have a complex set of aromas that I describe as walking through a blackberry patch during the dry summer months — a little earthy or dusty note as the soil gets kicked up, with the sweet

aromas of ripe fruit and dried leaves giving a slight hint of herbaceousness."

■ **Mike Westrick of Sterling Vineyards:** "Rutherford dust describes the unique texture that Rutherford Cabernets develop as they age; a quality that reminds me of Dutch cocoa used to make hot chocolate from scratch. These dusty,

cocoa powder tannins support the powerful black fruit character and give aging potential."

■ **Tom Rinaldi of Provenance Vineyards:** "Rutherford dust is a combination of texture and flavor on the palate, similar to cocoa powder and mocha — not gritty, but certainly textured to have a feel of subtle richness. I call it a 'speed bump' allowing the wine to pause on the mid-palate long enough to be remembered."

You can read more about Provenance Vineyards in this issue's "Wineries of Distinction" feature.

"The great wines from Rutherford have a complex set of aromas."



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VINESSE STYLE

THE PERFECT CUP

Neither man nor woman lives by wine alone. Sometimes, nothing beats a cup of hot coffee or tea.

And just as the right type of wine glass can make all the difference in one's perception and enjoyment of wine, the right coffee or tea cup can make those soul-warming beverages taste better — and lend a touch of style to your breakfast-in-bed tray.

Tastemaker Tiffany Meyers recently reviewed a handful of classy cups, and we now share her comments with you here.

■ **The Cheshire Cat Café Mug —**



“Zakka, a tough-to-translate concept in Japanese design, refers to all the miscellaneous

things in life that, simply put, make you smile. This mug and mini-dish for little treats, by Japanese Zakka

designer Shinzi Katoh, certainly fits the bill. Just try sipping from it without cracking a smile — impossible.”

\$28. threepotatofourshop.com

■ **Espresso Set —** “When



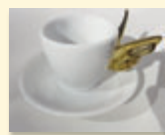
Shakespeare's Titania isn't chugging down love potions, the Queen of the Fairies no doubt sips

Americanos from this

espresso set by Blue Leaves. With two spoons shaped like blades of prairie grass and a pair of cups that sit on flower petal saucers, it's the stuff of mid-summer night's dreams.”

\$84. quelobjet.com

■ **Tea Cups —** “What with their seraphic wings and all, the porcelain Alada Tea Cups from the designers at Sao Paulo's Estudio Manus reminded



us of the last time Cupid nailed us with one of his arrows.

Oh, it hurt so good.”

\$90 per pair. do-not-touch.com

BEING GREEN

Black isn't the only “color” being touted as the “new green” these days. Red, as in those precious Cabernet Sauvignon grapes that make up your favorite glass of vino, is seeing green, too. Napa Valley and Sonoma winemakers, known for their stellar wine production, are making huge strides in their efforts to grow grapes without pesticides or fertilizers, as *The Daily Green* recently noted. On top of this, they're also figuring out ways to ferment and age wine by means other than stainless steel and electric refrigeration. Buildings made of thick straw bales and packed dirt that has been re-purposed from cave excavations, are just a couple of ways wineries are providing natural insulation for ideal fermentation and aging. Many other California winemakers are following the green path, creating wines that show their unique characteristics by virtue of sustainable farming, keeping wines at a cool temperature in freshly dug caves, and harnessing the sun by way of solar panels adapted to the common flat roofs of many wineries. The Frog's Leap winery in Rutherford, which produces organic wines, is powered solely by solar energy and also employs a geothermal system in its hospitality building, removing the necessity for heating and air conditioning. *For more on this trend, visit VinesseTODAY.com.*



To Your Health

A former President of the United States and a man who sought the Presidency in 2008 both have spoken about the benefits of moderate wine consumption.

“Wine from long habit has become indispensable to me,” said Thomas Jefferson. “Good wine is a necessity of life for me.”

Former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani, whose bid for the Republican Presidential nomination this year was derailed by a poor showing in the Florida Primary, noted: “I drink almost only red wine, and I’m absolutely convinced that it makes me healthier.”

Obviously, any discussion involving wine’s impact on one’s health must be accompanied by a word of caution. In study after study, perceived health benefits are derived from wine only if it is consumed in moderation.

With that as a caveat, here are a few recent media reports that back up the assertions of Messrs. Jefferson and Giuliani...

■ **From the Houston Chronicle:** Few people fully understand why red

wine is so good for you and how to maximize the beverage’s health benefits. *The Red Wine Diet* by Roger Corder (Avery, \$16), a professor of experimental therapeutics at William Harvey Research Institute in London, spells everything out, from the science behind wine’s benefits to how to incorporate it properly into

your diet. The program is built on Mediterranean eating principles, where most lunches and dinners are accompanied by a glass of wine.

Corder says the key to wine’s health benefits is a chemical compound called procyanidin, and the book offers a guide to which wines have the

highest procyanidin levels.

■ **From CBS News:** The “French Paradox” refers to the lower rates of heart disease in French people despite a diet that includes lots of rich, creamy foods (saturated fat) and, often, cigarettes. Researchers hypothesize that the compounds found in red wine (which the French often drink) fight the “bad” effects of smoking and red meat. This is due in part to two powerful phyto-nutrients found in wine: quercetin and resveratrol.

■ **From the Akron Beacon Journal:** Wine consumption, in moderation, has been shown to inhibit the formation of blood clots.



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Exploring Santa Maria's Wine & Tri-Tip Trails

Miles of picturesque vineyards unfold along rolling hills and into the far horizon.

Refreshing ocean air billows into the warm afternoon, guiding the grapes to perfect ripeness. A day of wine tasting finds a blissful end as you dine on fine regional cuisine at one of many local restaurants.

This is Santa Maria Valley wine country.

The Santa Maria Valley occupies the northern perimeter of Santa Barbara County on California's Central Coast, which today is recognized as one of the world's most dynamic winegrowing regions. The valley boasts a rare "transverse" geography, an east-west orientation that channels cool ocean air directly into the valley. The result is one of California's longest growing seasons, which ensures the development of complex, flavorful and exquisitely balanced grapes.

More than a dozen winery tasting rooms welcome visitors to the valley, and several of the estates have had their wares featured by the wine clubs of Vinesse, including Io Wines, Rancho Sisquoc, Curtis Winery, Fess Parker Winery & Vineyard, Firestone Vineyard and Lucas & Lewellen Vineyards. If you've tasted the wines, you'll want to visit the wineries that crafted them.

Numerous restaurants in the area can keep the wine flowing for you come dinner time.

Hotel restaurants aren't always the best, but an exception to the rule is Portabella Bar & Grill, located at the Holiday Inn Hotel & Suites. It's known for its specialty plates prepared with fresh portabella mushrooms, and it boasts a wine list featuring numerous Central Coast selections.



Another exception: the Vintners Bar & Grill at the Radisson Hotel. This award-winning restaurant also specializes in local bottlings, and its



views of the adjacent airport runways and rolling hillsides are almost as enjoyable as the fabulous cuisine.

Wine lovers who are lucky enough to live in the area head for the Wine Cottage Bistro in the "Old Town" area of Orcutt. From saffron and crème mussels to grilled rib eye steak and flatbread pizza, there's a dish to satisfy every palate. The Bistro also features live jazz on selected nights, as well as regularly scheduled

winemaker dinners and wine education classes.

Of course, no visit to the valley is complete without at least one Santa Maria-Style Barbecue. This sumptuous feast of barbecued sirloin, salsa, pinto beans, toasted French bread and green salad has been described by *Sunset* magazine as "the best barbecue in the world," and by the *California Visitor's Guide* as "the number one food experience not to be missed while visiting California."

The Santa Maria Barbecue has its roots in the mid-19th century, when the rancheros gathered to help one another brand their calves each spring. The host would prepare a Spanish-style barbecue as a way of saying *gracias* for his *vaqueros*

(America's first cowboys), family and friends. Under the oaks of this serene little coastal valley, they would enjoy a traditional feast that included beef barbecued over a red oak fire, with all the fixin's.

The present Santa Maria Barbecue grew out of this tradition, and achieved its "style" about 60 years ago when local residents began to string their beef on skewers and cook it over the hot coals of a red oak fire. Either top block sirloin or "tri-

tip" is rolled in a mixture of salt, pepper and garlic salt just prior to cooking, then barbecued until it has a hearty, smoky flavor. (You'll find recipes for Santa Maria-Style Tri-Tip and Santa Maria-Style Salsa in this issue's "Grapevine Cookbook" department.)

And where does one go in Santa Maria for the ultimate tri-tip experience? The possibilities are almost limitless. Many restaurants,



naturally, feature tri-tip meals on their menus, but on the weekends, a number of local service organizations will set up big grills in streetside parking lots. As one local told us, your best bet is simply to “follow your nose.”

For Further Information

Io Wines

805-934-4770
iowine.com

Rancho Sisquoc

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ranchosisquoc.com

Curtis Winery

805-686-8999
curtiswinery.com

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800-841-1104
fessparker.com

Firestone Vineyard

805-688-3940
firestonewine.com

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805-686-9336
llwine.com

Portabella Bar & Grill

805-928-6000

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805-934-4546
winecottagebistro.com

Santa Maria Valley Wine Country Assn.

866-480-5194
santamariavalley
winecountry.com



Provenance Winery Comes a Long Way in a Short Time

It has been less than 10 years since its debut release of Cabernet Sauvignon, yet Provenance Vineyards already is considered among the elite wine estates of the Napa Valley.

The word provenance (which rhymes with renaissance) is derived from the French and means origin or source. The provenance of a work of art, for instance, is its record of ownership from its creation to the present. Connoisseurs use a provenance as a guarantee of a work's authenticity. The Provenance Vineyards' name reflects the proprietors' goal of producing fine wines that are works of art.

To achieve this, grapes are sourced from some of the finest vineyards in the Napa Valley districts of Rutherford, Oakville, Mount Veeder and Carneros. And then they are placed in the capable hands of winemaker Tom Rinaldi, who believes in taking a non-invasive approach to his craft.

“Our Rutherford Cabernet Sauvignon has a heritage that stretches back to Napa Valley's most historic and best-known wines,” says Rinaldi. The vineyard is part of what once was called Caymus Rancho, the ranch of Napa Valley pioneer George Yount.

“The vineyard's classic Rutherford soil has excellent drainage and protection from the drying wind,” Rinaldi notes. “The vines have deep, well-established roots. They're mature vines that produce consistently great flavors — no awkward adolescent phases where they vary from vintage to vintage.”

More than 150 years of winemaking confirms that the Rutherford area produces top-flight Cabernet Sauvignon. Soil and climate are the reasons for the district's preeminence, helping create elegant richness, depth and density in the grapes.

The Provenance winemaking facility is located on property formerly occupied by Chateau Beaucanon, where a gorgeous new tasting room was constructed. Pay a visit, and you can't help but feel the attention to detail that goes into everything — including the floor of the

winery, which is made from the staves of used wine barrels.



Quotes Du Jour

■ *A vintner in India, who is working to improve the perception of his country's wines:*

"If you compare ours with the best of French wines, we are definitely not there. But if you compare it to the worst of French wines, we are definitely better."

■ *Italian winemaker Marchese Piero Antinori, comparing his country's wines to those of France:*

"France has been oriented to quality wine production for a very long time. They have found every corner that makes serious wine. In Italy, it is still an early development to go into quality wine production, and so we are, in a way, at the beginning of this revolution in wine."

■ *England's King Edward VII, on the unique appeal of wine:*

"One not only drinks wine, one smells it, observes it, tastes it, sips it and one talks about it."

For more musings on wine, visit VinesseTODAY.com and click on "Wine Wit."

Q AND A

I enjoy receiving your wines; they are obviously high quality and usually do not last long in my house. A friend recommended Amorone and Borolo wines to me. Can you describe these wines to me and compare/contrast them to other reds, such as Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot?

— Terry Bronson

Dear Terry:

Thanks for the nice words about the club wines; we'll pass along your note to the members of our tasting panel. As for the wines recommended by your friend, let's first get the spelling correct: Amarone and Barolo. Both hail from Italy, and Amarone often has a raisin-like quality to it. We'd compare it to some of the higher-alcohol Zinfandels made in California. Barolo is made from the Nebbiolo grape variety, and some consider it to be the best wine type made in Italy. It would compare favorably with Cabernet Sauvignon in structure and aging potential.

And even though you didn't ask, we'd drink either Amarone or Barolo with Italian food. There's just something about matching a particular country's wine with the country's cuisine that can create magic at the dinner table.

What is meant by the phrase, "fruity wine"? Since wine is made from grapes, isn't it supposed to be fruity?

Very good point! What's so unusual about wine is that the fruit from which it's made can taste like so many other fruits when it's fermented into wine. Apples, pears, citrus, cherries, plums and assorted berries are just some of the aroma and flavor impressions once can experience with wine. But there are others aromas and flavors in wine as well — herbs, earthen notes, plus an array of nuances that come from oak barrel aging. A "fruity wine" simply is one in which the fruit impressions outweigh the other characteristics.



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THE BILLBOARD AS FINE ART

Visitors to California's Central Coast community of Santa Maria are greeted from the north and south on Highway 101 by billboards. Nothing unusual about that, right? Except these aren't ordinary billboards; they're works of art.

Sponsored by the Santa Maria Valley Chamber of Commerce and the Visitor & Convention Bureau, the billboards depict scenes of the local wine country, painted by famed California artist Robert Burridge. You can see an example of Burridge's work in this issue's "Wine Travel Tips" feature.



TEMECULA VINTNERS CUT DOWN ON REVELERS

Winery owners in the Southern California growing region of Temecula have joined other vintners in clamping down on the "rolling parties" that have become all too common in wine country. They have imposed stiff rules that require the local transportation companies to keep their passengers under control when visiting the wineries. "People would show up at the wineries in costumes," says Tomi Arbogast, executive director of the Temecula Valley Winegrowers Association. "It was a tell-tale sign their mission was a little different." Up in Napa Valley,

a number of wineries have addressed the problem in another way: They've simply put up signs announcing: "No Limos."

FIVE PROMINENT WINERIES ARE SOLD

The world's largest wine company — New York-based Constellation Brands — got even bigger at the end of 2007 when it purchased Fortune Brands' wine business for \$885 million. The transaction included 1,500 acres of vineyards and the

Geyser Peak, Clos du Bois, Wild Horse, Buena Vista and Gary Farrell wineries. It also included the Atlas Peak brand, as well as the XYZin line

created at Geyser Peak. A number of executives — most notably Geyser Peak guru Daryl Groom — were not retained by Constellation.

SCHRAMSBERG FOUNDER DAVIES PASSES AWAY

Not long after one of her sons sued her for breach of a shareholder agreement, Schramsberg Vineyards co-founder Jamie Davies passed away. You can read more about this California sparkling wine pioneer on VinesseTODAY.com.

SOME RED WINES HELP FIGHT BACTERIA

On the health beat, a recent study reveals that certain types of red wine may be helpful in killing bacteria, including those that cause conditions such as travelers' diarrhea. Eleven red wines were tested at the University of Missouri, and those that proved to be most effective against bacteria were Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Pinot Noir and Shiraz.

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The Grapevine COOKBOOK



SANTA MARIA-STYLE TRI-TIP

This Central Coast of California treat matches beautifully with almost any red wine, particularly Zinfandel, Syrah and Merlot.

Ingredients

- 1 tbsp. salt
- 1/2 tsp. black pepper
- 1/2 tsp. garlic salt
- 1 prime top sirloin steak (3-in. thick), or tri-tip
- Red oak logs, or charcoal and oak chips

Preparation

1. Place oak wood logs in a pit with a movable grate and burn until red-hot. Backyard chefs may use charcoal mixed with oak wood chips and bark, available at many markets. Once lit, the fire should be hot but not blazing.
2. Season meat with salt, pepper and garlic salt. Do not trim off fat before putting meat on the grill.

By placing the fat side over the fire first, the juice will come up through the meat and make it tender.

3. Sear the lean part of the meat over the fire for 5-10 minutes to seal the juices, then flip over to the fat side for 30-45 minutes, depending on the size of the cut and the desired degree of doneness. When juice appears at the top of the meat, it's time to flip for another 30-45 minutes.

4. The fat can easily be trimmed after cooking. It's important to slice tri-tip against the grain the long way, not across the triangle. It won't be a uniform cut, but it will be more tender.

SANTA MARIA-STYLE SALSA

This recipe makes a wonderful companion to Santa Maria-Style Tri-Tip, and yields about 3-and-a-half cups.

Ingredients

- 3 medium fresh tomatoes, chopped
- 1/2 cup finely chopped celery
- 1/2 cup chopped green onions
- 1/2 cup finely chopped green chiles
- 2 tbsp. snipped cilantro
- 1 tsp. vinegar
- Dash of Worcestershire sauce
- Pinch of garlic salt
- Pinch of dried oregano, crushed
- A few drops of hot pepper sauce

Preparation

1. Combine all ingredients in a bowl.
2. Cover and let stand for one hour to blend flavors.

Light & Sweet

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2004 Sergio Traverso Mendoza, Argentina Chardonnay	\$16.99
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2006 Hope Estate Hunter Valley, Australia Chardonnay	\$18.99
2006 Ledgewood Creek Three Clones Suisun Valley, California Chardonnay	\$19.99
2006 Pennautier Vin de Pays d'Oc, France Viognier	\$19.99
N.V. Duval Leroy Brut Champagne.....	\$40.00

RED WINES

Member Price

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2005 Eileen's Edition California Merlot	\$12.99
Stella Rosa Piedmont, Italy Sparkling Red Wine	\$16.99
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2005 Kilikanoon South Australia Killermans Run Shiraz	\$22.99
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2005 Dry Creek Vineyards Dry Creek Valley Cabernet Sauvignon.....	\$53.99

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