Volume 16 Number 5 ©Vinesse Wine Club 2008





Martin's Journal

See those grapes a few lines down? Those, as you may have guessed, are winegrapes.

I am constantly amazed that such small orbs of fruit can be transformed into such flavorful, complex and intriguing beverages — no two of which ever are the same.



Yes, there are some vintners who blend to a specific style or a certain flavor profile. It's the vinous version of "branding," I suppose. But even those winemakers come up short in precisely duplicating a particular bottling from vintage to vintage.

Perfectly ripened, healthy grapes are the winemaker's best friend — yes, even more so than his dog. That's why we're devoting this issue's "Cellarmaster" feature to nine fascinating facts about winegrapes.

I hope you enjoy that story, and I know you'll enjoy the enclosed wines.



Spring Brings the Call of the Wine Country Picnic

The winter months can be quite chilly in California wine country and other wine regions across
America.

But with spring upon us and the hot summer months ahead, it's time to pack a picnic, pick a couple bottles of

wine, and enjoy a leisurely meal in the great outdoors.

If you're looking for an out-of-theordinary picnic

experience in wine country, consider Jack London's Beauty Ranch in the Sonoma Valley.

Though San Francisco born, London lived and wrote during his later years at his Beauty Ranch, where his writing career reached its peak. He loved exploring the valley on horseback and once observed, "When I first came here, tired of cities and people, I settled down... on some of the most beautiful, primitive land to be found in California."

Today, 800 spectacular acres comprise a state historic park that bears his name. It's a place where you can hike, picnic or stroll among the oaks, madrones, California buckeyes, Douglas fir and redwoods... examine Jack London memorabilia at The House of Happy Walls... wander the haunting ruins of Wolf House... or ride on horseback up a three-mile trail to the summit of Sonoma Mountain for a magnificent view of the valley.

London was only 29 when he and his second wife started their ranch in the hills above Glen Ellen. He was



already internationally famous for *The Call of the Wild* (1903) and *The Sea Wolf* (1904). In 1909, following a troubled two-year voyage through the South Pacific on their boat (*The Snark*), the Londons made Glen Ellen their permanent home.

Through one of his later novels written at Beauty Ranch, London brought new fame to the region. In *The Valley of the Moon* (1913), he perpetuated an Indian legend that claims Sonoma means "many moons."

Today, the park is a continuing memorial to a remarkable author, farmer and adventurer. Not to mention a great place for a picnic.

Admission: \$6 Per Car. Operating Hours: 707-938-5216.



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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Robert Johnson

Wine Steward:

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Wine Country: Redefined

lthough

'Chateau Buffalo'

may not roll off

the tongue, it's a

nice place to

have around

when winter

kicks in.

I've always thought of "wine country" as anyplace there's a high concentration of vineyards and wineries.

Seems pretty logical, right?

But over the past five years or so, "wine country" is being redefined by a group of independent but undeniably "connected" people who are making

wine not in the traditional setting, but rather in urban digs.

I'm talking about places like Portland, Oregon... Seattle, Washington... Fort Worth, Texas... and Buffalo, New York.

In Northern California's
East Bay region alone,
more than a dozen "urban
wineries" have popped up
over the last few years.
One of the more
fascinating among them is
Periscope Cellars in
Emeryville, an industrial

town at the eastern end of the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge. The winery is located in an old World War II submarine repair station.

Brendan Eliason opened the combination winery/art gallery in 2005. I've been there twice, and both times it was packed with visitors.

Eliason summed up his concept in an interview with *USA Today*. "One of the great things about grapes," he said, "is that they care a lot about where they're

grown, but not at all where they're made into wine. There is growing recognition that you really don't have to tie the winemaking to one piece of dirt."

I can just see my vintner friends in France rolling their eyes. There, winemaking is *all* about the land and the connection of the winemaker to that land. True, even that historic wine country has seen some changes in recent years, but the basic attitude remains: Wine should be "of a place."

At America's new urban wineries, that "place" could be anything from an old downtown warehouse to a fancy culinary center. And even though "Chateau Buffalo" may not roll off the tongue, it's a nice place to have around when those frigid winter temperatures kick in.

While the growing popularity of the urban winery more or less parallels the brewpub phenomenon, it's by no means a new concept. For evidence, I

point to a winery which has been delighting members of the wine clubs of Vinesse for years with its wonderful bottlings: San Antonio Winery, which is located not in Texas Hill Country, but in downtown Los Angeles. It has been making wine continuously since 1917.

Will urban wineries ever replace "wine country"? I doubt it. But in the coming age of \$4 per gallon gasoline, they do make a less expensive alternative.



D Winery. A Napa Valley wine Lestate that recently installed solar panels in its efforts to be more environmentally friendly. (See "Being Green" in this issue for more.)

peritif. A before-dinner drink, **** intended to stimulate both the palate and conversation. Aperitif wines typically are sparkling, white, or Rosé.

D ouquet. The combination of a **B** wine's aromas. Also known as a wine's "nose."

¬risp. A fresh, brisk quality, onormally associated with the acidity present in some white varieties.

umb. Description of a wine that fails to reveal its aromas and flavors. In most cases, dumb wines are either too young (i.e., need more cellaring) or served too cold.

arthy. An aroma or flavor reminiscent of earth (such as mushrooms or herbs). More common in European than American wines.

APPELLATION SHOWCASE

SONOMA VALLEY

The Sonoma Valley, north of San Francisco, is recognized as the birthplace of the California wine industry.

Today, the 17-mile-long valley is blanketed with thousands of acres of

vineyards, producing grapes that vintners transform into awardwinning wines.

In the town of Sonoma are two of the

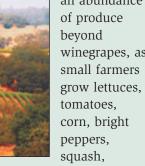
oldest wineries in California. At the oldest — Buena Vista — tastings are available every day. And throughout the valley are numerous family-run operations where the person behind the tasting counter may well be the winemaker.

Sonoma's town square is an

enormous shaded plaza, rimmed with old adobe buildings and carefully preserved historic structures. A stroll around the square will take you past former Mexican army barracks, 19th-century hotels, a pristine mission, chic boutiques and exceptional restaurants.

Much of what you'll find on the restaurant tables is grown or raised

> in the valley. The region has an abundance of produce beyond winegrapes, as small farmers grow lettuces, tomatoes, corn, bright peppers,



pumpkins, berries, melons, apples and more.

Farmers' markets and artisan bakeries bring the bounty directly to the public, and the Sonoma Plaza has plenty of picnic tables so you can enjoy the freshness in beautiful surroundings.



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VINESSE STYLE

A COOKBOOK TIMELINE

Where would we be without a dependable cookbook? And, no, the answer is not, "Eating out more."

While we always include two winefriendly recipes in each issue of *The Grapevine* (and even more in our annual "Food Issue"), nothing beats having a cookbook on hand when you want to prepare a memorable meal.

With that in mind, let's relive a few great moments in cooking — and cookbook — history...

1796 — *American Cookery* by Amelia Simmons is the first cookbook published in America.

1824 — *The Virginia Housewife* by Mary Randolph, recognized as the first regional cookbook (focused on Southern dishes), is published.

1896 — The first cookbook to use standardized measurements is published. It's called *Fannie Farmer's Boston Cooking School Cookbook*.

1936 — Long before *The Joy of Sex*, at least in terms of publishing, there was *The Joy of Cooking*, written by a

St. Louis housewife named Irma Rombauer.

1947 — The first microwave oven, manufactured by Raytheon Co., hits the marketplace.

1961 — Julia Child writes *Mastering* the Art of French Cooking.

1963 — Child gets her own show on Boston public television. Her fewfrills, common-sense, if not entirely healthful approach to cooking is embraced by the last generation of homemakers.

1971 — Alice Waters opens Chez Panisse in Berkeley, California. It's one of the first restaurants to focus on locally sourced food — a trend that is being re-embraced as part of today's "green" movement.

1982 — Future felon Martha Stewart publishes her groundbreaking cookbook, *Entertaining*. It was a good thing.

1993 — The Food Network debuts.

2002 — Rachael Ray's first cooking show, "30 Minute Meals," debuts on the Food Network.

2007 — Amazon.com lists 17,000 cookbooks for sale.

BEING GREEN



Napa Valley's ZD Winery has installed a photovoltaic system of solar panels, 18 feet wide and 500 feet long, on the edge of its vineyard. The system will produce enough energy annually to power 22 homes or remove 16 cars from the road for a year.

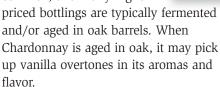


9 Facts About Winegrapes

How many times have we heard that it takes great grapes to make great wine?

That being the case, here are nine fascinating facts about winegrapes...

1. The Chardonnay variety is a classic white wine grape. Its original fame comes from its success in the Burgundy and Champagne regions of France. Chardonnay takes oak well, and many higher



- **2.** With winegrapes, flowering and fruit development determine yield and fruit quality.
- **3.** It is estimated that Australian grape growers use more than \$30 million worth of fungicides on grapevines each year to prevent or treat outbreaks of powdery mildew. Current research is focused on developing grapevines that combine fruit and wine quality with resistance to powdery mildew, using natural genes from American grape species.
- **4.** Wine flavor and aroma are the result of a complex mixture of compounds that change a great deal during the transition from berry to wine.
- **5.** Grape-derived flavor compounds are produced during berry development, with the final mixture depending on

variables that include the grape variety, environmental conditions during the growing season, management of the vineyard and harvest date.

6. Flavor and aroma are difficult properties to measure in any food product. In grape berries, there are

literally hundreds of compounds contributing to flavor and aroma.

7. Cabernet Sauvignon is a small, dark, thick-skinned grape that needs slightly warmer growing conditions than many other varieties in order to achieve maturity. DNA testing shows that

it is descended from Cabernet Franc and Sauvignon Blanc.

- **8.** Tannins, which provide mouthfeel and astringency to fruit and wine, are polymers of compounds similar to anthocyanins, though they are not normally colored. Research has shown that a controlling gene, which is similar to the regulators of color, regulates the synthesis of tannins. This knowledge could one day be used to produce grapes and wines with a better balance of these antioxidant compounds.
- 9. Historically, crop yield in grapes has been estimated by collecting and weighing clusters or specified numbers of berries, a labor-intensive and expensive operation. These estimates are snapshots fixed at one time of a dynamic process. That's why much work is being done to develop an automated process for gauging crop yields. One system utilizes electronic devices and wireless communications to monitor tension in the trellis wires used on grapevines.



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The Santa Ynez Valley for Foodies

Thanks in part to the movie "Sideways," but mostly because of the talented vintners who call it home, Santa Barbara County's Santa Ynez Valley has become a highly anticipated destination for wine and food lovers.

The state of the s

The Los Padres National Forest and Santa Ynez and San Rafael mountain

ranges encircle the Santa Ynez Valley's six distinctive communities in alphabetical order, Ballard, Buellton, Los Alamos, Los Olivos, Santa Ynez and Solvang.

The name Santa Ynez derives from the Old Mission Santa Ines, the first Spanish settlement in the area, founded in 1804. Prior to the arrival of European settlers, Native American Chumash resided in the valley for thousands of years. Today, members of the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians have a federally recognized reservation, including the Chumash Casino Resort, adjoining the township of

With all the fresh air and sunshine that blesses the region, it's easy to work up an appetite for the area's signature Scandinavian fare in Solvang, as well as wine

Santa Ynez.

country cuisine and international fare throughout the valley.

If you're going for the wine, then wine country cuisine is your best culinary choice.

Bacchus at the Storybook Inn offers three-course prix-fixe dinners featuring the finest local ingredients. Ballard Inn Restaurant features executive chef/proprietor Budi Kazali's innovative fusion cooking, which earned a 4-diamond rating from AAA.

Escargot and duck highlight an extensive French menu prepared by chef/owner Jacques Toulet at Cabernet Bistro. Meadows Restaurant & Bar serves breakfast, lunch, dinner and Sunday brunch with a European flair.

Restaurant Marcella at Fess Parker's Wine Country Inn emphasizes gourmet gastronomy daily. River Grill at the Alisal opens daily for all three meals and features California cuisine with a panoramic golf course view.

The Vineyard House Restaurant, located in a charming Victorian with an outdoor verandah, also serves California cuisine for lunch and dinner, five days per week. And The Willows at the Chumash Casino Resort offers epicurean dining nightly in a stylish setting.

Two favorites among locals (and several members of the Vinesse tasting panel) are Brothers
Restaurant at Mattei's Tavern and Patrick's Side Street Café.

Brothers — owned and operated by Jeff and Matt Nichols — opened in a very small space in 1996, which

> it quickly outgrew. In 2002, it moved to the historic Mattei's Tavern, where it continues to specialize in "made from scratch" cuisine and legendary service.

Patrick's Side Street Café makes a wonderful midday stop between winery tasting rooms, as its lunch menu includes some of the best sandwiches you'll ever taste (we love the ovenroasted turkey breast on oat nut bread, accompanied by lettuce, sliced tomato and mayo). At dinner, the choices range from seared jumbo scallops to Bavarian pork





schnitzel, and from pan-broiled boneless trout to chicken poblano.

Most of the restaurants have well-selected wine lists, typically heavy on local bottlings, some of which are made in such small quantities that you'll never see them outside of Santa Ynez Valley.

For Further Information

Bacchus at the Storybook Inn Solvang • 805-688-1703

Ballard Inn Restaurant
Ballard • 805-688-7770

Cabernet BistroSolvang • 805-688-8871

Meadows Restaurant & Bar Solvang • 805-688-9003

Restaurant Marcella Los Olivos • 805-688-7788

River Grill at the Alisal Solvang • 805-688-7784

Vineyard House Restaurant Santa Ynez • 805-688-2886

The Willows
Santa Ynez • 805-688-0855

Brothers Restaurant at Mattei's Tavern Los Olivos • 805-688-4820

Patrick's Side Street Café
Los Olivos • 805-686-4004



Folonari Family Revamps Line to Focus on Quality

Can a longestablished winemaking family reinvent itself in order to meet the needs and challenges of the 21st century?

If the family is named Folonari,

the answer is yes.

In the latter part of 2000, the Folonaris completely revamped their company's structure. Previously a single entity with extensive estate holdings in Tuscany, the family owned the Nozzole

and Ruffino brands, as well as wines under the Cabreo, Spalletti, Lodola Nuova and Il Greppone Mazzi names.

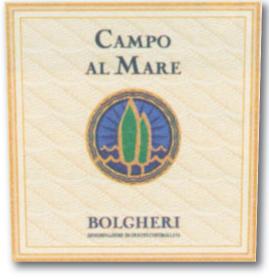
The subdivision of the estate vineyards and reapportionment of brands resulted in the creation of two new entities, of which Tenute Ambrogio Folonari is one. Dr. Ambrogio Folonari and his son, Giovanni Folonari, now own and manage five previously existing estates as well as five recently acquired ones — in Tuscany and elsewhere.

In 1999, the Folonari family began to acquire property in the commune of Castagneto Carducci, in the province of Livorno, near the Mediterranean coast. In this area, during the 1990s, the Bolgheri D.O.C. was resoundingly affirmed. Tenute di Ambrogio e Giovanni Folonari assembled approximately 100 acres of land, of which 60 are planted to vines and the remainder are in the process of being planted.

An ultra-modern winery, designed by Parisian architect Jean-Michel Wilmotte, was completed at the end of 2002. The estate's first releases were the 2004 vintage of Campo al Mare Vermentino di Toscana I.G.T., and the 2003 vintage of Campo al Mare Bolgheri D.O.C., a blend of Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc. The 2005 Bolgheri

> received a 93 rating from Wine Spectator magazine. In this revitalized enterprise, it is Ambrogio and Giovanni Folonari's philosophy to produce distinctive, limited-quantity wines from a portfolio of estates,

exclusively from owned grapes, which reflect their individual terroirs.



Quotes Du Gour

■ Actress Bette Davis, on what the hue of wine says about someone:

"Never, never trust anyone who asks for white wine. It means they're phonies."

■ Craig Claiborne, on the "ritual" of wine drinking:

"For some obscure reason, some authorities seem bent on making the drinking of wine a ritual more complicated than chess. They have succeeded in inhibiting a large section of the public and depriving them of one of the greatest pleasures known to man."

■ Physician and writer Salvatore P. Lucia, on wine's place in society:

"Wine has participated universally in the cultural ascent of man, serving as a festive drink at his birth, a solemn drink at his death, a sacred drink in religious ceremonies, and a stimulant of discussion in symposium and intellectual colloquia."

■ *Actor Burgess Meredith:*

"Wine — it's in my veins and I can't get it out."

Q_{AND}A

I found two bottles of wine in my wine rack that my brother gave us several years ago. Could you let me know if they are still good, and/or when we should drink them? 1) Baron Philippe de Rothschild Mouton Cadet, Bordeaux, 1994, and 2) Baron Philippe de Rothschild Mouton Cadet, Bordeaux Blanc, 1994.

— Susan Conway

Well, Susan, we have some probably bad news and some hopefully good news. First, a little bit about the brand. Mouton Cadet is the mass-produced "little brother" of Chateau Mouton Rothschild, established in 1931 and sold for a much lower price than the Rothschild-branded wines of Bordeaux. Quality was spotty through the years. In some vintages, the wines were perfectly fine; a few even attained "excellent" ratings. In other vintages, they were nothing to write home about. However, since the early 1990s, the quality has leveled out. We'd describe Mouton

Cadet bottlings as decent everyday drinking wines. Good wines? Yes. Ageworthy wines? That's a different matter.

It's rare for any white wine — regardless of its "breeding" — to be in real good drinking shape after it has been in the bottle for 10 years. With the Mouton Cadet Blanc, you're looking at a 14-year-old white wine. So, about all we can say is: Good luck!

On the other hand, many red wines are just coming into their own at age 14. So, it's possible that your Mouton Cadet red wine from 1994 will taste just fine. We wouldn't cellar it any longer; it's time to open up that bottle with fingers crossed.

As a general rule, white wines should be consumed within about five years of their vintage date, and reds within seven. Longevity can vary by varietal and how the wine is stored, but you're almost always better off drinking a wine a little too soon than a little too late.

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A BREATH OF FRESH AIR COMES TO FRANCE

Things are changing in France. And if you're a wine lover, the changes are for the better. First, be aware that the country has joined the Irish and Italians in banning smoking from all bars, cafes and restaurants. Before the ban, the smoke could be so thick in some eateries that it made no sense to order an expensive bottle of

wine because one could neither smell nor taste it



available at the Harvest Moon Café on the Sonoma Square.

properly. Now, the smoking has been banished to outdoor patios, so if you're planning to drink wine, ask for a table inside.

NEW DINING TREND: AFFORDABLE BISTROS

The second favorable trend for travelers to France involves a number of famous chefs opening up much more affordable signature bistros. The cuisine may be less elaborate than at the famous restaurants, but it's still top-notch and much less expensive. In Lyon, for instance, look for chef Paul Bocuse's Le Nord, Le Sud, L'Est and L'Ouest bistros.

2 ECLECTIC SONOMA DINING DESTINATIONS

Looking for a different dining experience in Sonoma County wine country? Here are two eclectic choices right in the town of Sonoma. If you're a sushi fan, check out Shiso, where the maki-sushi rolls are named

which is run by two alums of Chez Panisse in Berkeley. The key word for this menu: fresh. 707-933-8160.

after area wine regions. Example: The

combination of spicy tuna, tempura

adventurous): the "Mendocino Roll,"

consisting of albacore, asparagus and

with spicy aioli and sweet eel sauce.

tempura-fried green onion, topped

707-933-9331. Much less elaborate,

shrimp, cucumber and avocado is

dubbed "Howell Mountain." Our

favorite (and for the more

TRUMP'S SIXTEEN: BRING LOTS OF MONEY

Chicago's newest landmark building, the Trump International Hotel & Tower, continues to rise into the sky, casting long shadows on Michigan Avenue and the Chicago River. But even as construction continues, parts of the building including the hotel and the restaurant known as Sixteen — have opened for business. For wine lovers and lovers in general, Sixteen is a must-see destination. Part of the T-shaped fover is lined by wine vaults of floorto-ceiling glass. Turn your head, and awe-inspiring views of the city skyline envelope you. It's jawdropping beautiful... and, yes, jaw-dropping expensive as well. Bring money and credit cards. 312-588-8000.



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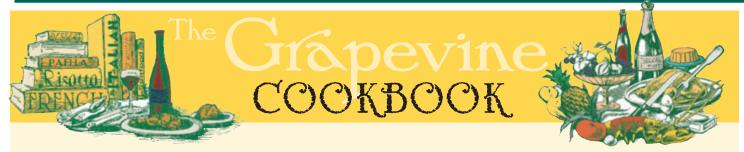
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TURKEY EMPANADAS

These tasty "turnovers" or "hot pockets" match well with Syrah, Italian red wines, or white wines that have not been over-exposed to oak. This recipe makes 10 empanadas.

Ingredients

- Vegetable oil
- 1/4 cup finely chopped bell pepper
- 1/4 cup finely chopped onion
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped cilantro
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped celery
- 1 clove garlic
- 2 cups shredded cooked turkey
- 1 tablespoon steak sauce
- 1 teaspoon salt, divided
- Pinch of turmeric
- 3 cups instant corn masa
- 2 to 2 1/2 cups water
- Shredded cabbage

Preparation

1. In a medium saucepan, heat 2 tablespoons oil over medium heat. Add pepper, onion, cilantro, celery and

garlic. Cook 2 minutes.

- 2. Add turkey, sauce, 1/2 teaspoon salt and turmeric. Cook for 5 minutes until sizzling sticky. Set aside.
- 3. Measure masa and 1/2 teaspoon salt into a medium mixing bowl. Add water slowly, kneading the mixture with your hands, until moist dough is formed. Divide into 10 balls, and cover with a kitchen towel.
- 4. Roll one ball of dough between your palms for several seconds, and place it on top of Saran Wrap or a similar surface. Pat and turn until the circle of dough is 6 inches in diameter. Use flat fingers of one hand for the patting, and curved fingers of the other hand to shape the edge.
- 5. Spread 1-2 heaping tablespoons of turkey mixture across center of the circle. Use the plastic to lift and fold the dough into a semicircle. Press gently to seal the edges. Repeat with remaining dough and filling, keeping the finished empanadas covered with a towel.
- 6. Pour oil into a medium skillet to a depth of 1/4 inch. Heat over mediumhigh. Fry empanadas two at a time until crisp and golden, about 2

minutes per side. Open on seam and stuff in cabbage. Serve while hot.

SWEET POTATO FRIES

This recipe makes a tasty side dish for almost any main course you'd serve with red wine. It makes 4 servings.

Ingredients

- 4 sweet potatoes, cut into large fry shapes
- 1 tablespoon water
- 2 teaspoons Italian seasoning
- 1/2 teaspoon lemon pepper
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 2 tablespoons olive oil

Preparation

- 1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees F.
- 2. Place cut sweet potatoes and water in a microwave-safe dish. Cook in microwave on full power for 5 minutes. Drain off liquid, then toss fries with Italian seasoning, lemon pepper, salt, pepper and olive oil.
- 3. Arrange fries on a baking sheet in a single layer. Bake for 30 minutes, turning once, or until fries are crisp on outside.



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2004 Sergio Traverso Mendoza, Argentina Chardonnay	
2006 Ile La Forge Vin de Pays d'Oc Viognier	
2006 Hope Estate Hunter Valley, Australia Chardonnay	
2006 Ledgewood Creek Three Clones Suisun Valley, California Chardonnay	
2006 Pennautier Vin de Pays d'Oc, France Viognier	
14.v. Duvai Ecroy Drut Champagne	Ψ10.00
RED WINES	Member Price
2004 Soaring Aces California Cabernet Sauvignon	\$12.99
2004 Soaring Aces California Cabernet Sauvignon 2005 Eileen's Edition California Merlot	\$12.99
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