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The Grapevine

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER FOR VINESSE WINE CLUB MEMBERS



MARTIN'S JOURNAL

When I wash my wine glasses... which occurs, uh, at least once a day... I think about a recent Grapevine article on that topic.

It contained some good advice, but I'd like to add my two cents' worth...



Never put dish soap in the glass first. It "adheres" to the glass and is more likely to leave residue. Put hot water in first, and then the tiniest bit of soap while filling with hot tap water.

Better than introducing soap directly into the glass or onto the sponge is getting some soapy water started in another container — a bowl, plastic dish, etc. — and then dipping the sponge into the soapy water before introducing it into the glass. You need a sponge to act as a squeegee of sorts.

Bottom line: It's all about dissolving the soap before it comes into contact with the glass. And then rinse like hell.

Martin Stewart Jr.

Frosty North Coast Spring Could Limit Grape Yields This Autumn

By Robert Johnson

Some North Coast of California grape growers are calling this spring the frostiest in years, with scattered reports of close calls and some damage to vine shoots that had budded early.

The temperature around the North Coast dropped to around freezing on up to 13 nights in late March and early April, forcing growers to lose sleep as they wielded or readied frost-protection measures such as water sprinklers and wind machines for sometimes four or five nights in a row.

Early projections for how much frost damage will affect winegrape crop yield this season range from 5 to 10 percent. Yet the full extent won't be known until grape clusters start forming and any secondary or tertiary vine growth appears after any frost-burned initial shoots die.

Jeffrey Popick, a vintner in St. Helena who represents more than

100 North Coast growers for the Allied Grape Growers marketing group, told the *North Coast Business Journal* that he has seen and heard about frost damage in the Carneros appellation and in Suisun Valley of Solano County, locations where three- to four-inch Chardonnay shoots showed signs of burn.

Wild swings of cold and warm spells were courtesy of four cold-air and high-pressure systems from western Canada that were too dry to allow clouds to form a nighttime blanket. The lowest temperature



reported in Sonoma County was 25 degrees, and it reached 27 degrees for three hours in Russian River Valley.

Charlie Barra of Redwood Valley Vineyards in northern Mendocino County said he used up a lot of the water in his storage ponds battling 15

nights of frost beginning March 16. Running out of water is a real concern. In 1973, Napa Valley growers used up all their frost-protection water after a dozen straight days of frost and lost a large portion of the crop on the 13th night.

Here's hoping this year's crop yield is impacted only slightly.

Check out "Editor's Journal" every Monday 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.

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Keeping Your Wine Safe

There are many elements that can negatively impact the flavor of your wine.

Whether you're a serious collector or a casual drinker, you'll want to protect your investment and try to reduce or eliminate the forces of these elements. Many wines (especially reds) will improve with age.

This means that any wine enthusiast will need to store some wine for some length of time.

Here are some key factors to consider when planning a storage area for your wine...

■ **Air.** Exposure to air can cause a wine to quickly turn to vinegar. To keep air out, bottles should be stored horizontally so the wine stays in contact with the cork. This keeps the cork moist and expanded, thereby preventing air from entering the bottle.

■ **Temperature.** The optimal storage temperature is 40 to 52 degrees for white wines, and 52 to 60 degrees for reds. The low to mid-50s is best if you're storing whites and reds together. While overall temperature is important, the stability of the

temperature is even more so. Frequent and rapid fluctuations can severely damage wine.

■ **Humidity.** Proper humidity is important to keep the corks in good, resilient condition, thereby preventing them from shrinking. A relative humidity of 50 to 80 percent is acceptable, but 70 percent is recommended. This is why redwood is the preferred wood for wine cellar

racking. Redwood resists the mold, mildew, rotting, splitting and warping that other types of wood would endure in this type of humidity.

■ **Light.** Winemakers do not use clear bottles because light will prematurely age a bottle of wine. However, ultraviolet light will penetrate even dark-colored glass and may

give a wine an unpleasant aroma. When lighting a wine cellar, incandescent light is preferable to fluorescent light as it emits less ultraviolet light.

■ **Odors.** Your storage space should be free of any extraneous odors as they can enter through the cork and contaminate the wine. For this reason, it is recommended that wood racking be left untreated.





WINE A_{TO}Z

KMW. Acronym for Klosterneuburger Mostwage, a scale used in Austria to measure sugar (and ripeness) in grapes.

Lees. The remnants of yeast cells that settle to the bottom of barrels or tanks after fermentation. Wines that are left in contact with the lees tend to be more complex.

Mas. The term used in southern France for a domaine, often translated simply as “farm.”

Nonvintage. Although “multi-vintage” would seem to be more accurate, a term that indicates more than one vintage of wine is included in the cuvee.

Off-dry. A term describing a wine that is slightly sweet — usually with 1 to 3 percent residual sugar. (More than 3 percent would be considered sweet.)

Punt. The indentation found in the bottom of many wine bottles.

APPELLATION SHOWCASE

BAROSSA VALLEY, AUSTRALIA

Just a couple of leisurely hours by car from Adelaide, the Barossa Valley was discovered a century and a half ago as having the most appropriate soil and climate for growing wine grapes.

Silesian and English pioneers who had migrated to the Australian valley found winemaking fruitful, and in the 150 years or so since that time, the

Barossa has grown as famous as its wines.

There’s hardly a good drop of Shiraz, Grenache or Riesling which hasn’t had its source in Barossa Valley soil — or so the Barossa people say.

The Barossa wineries now number more than 50 in the area between Mt. Pleasant and the Sturt Highway in the north. You come across such well-known names as Wolf Blass, Seppelts at Seppeltsfield, Penfolds, Kaiser-Stuhl, Saltram, Hardy’s, Leo Buring, Yalumba, St. Hallett, Bethany, Krondorf, Orlando and Chateau Yaldarra.

One of the best times to visit the Barossa wineries is during the Vintage Festival, which takes place during the Easter season. It is held every other year in the odd-numbered year.



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VINESSE STYLE

SMILE AND SAY, 'CHEESE!'

If you're perfectly satisfied with spraying Cheese Whiz on a Ritz, you may stop reading right here and move on to the next story.

However, if you're looking to expand your cheese horizons, read on. The tips that follow will help you do just that.

When one takes into account the style of artisan cheesemakers, there are literally thousands of cheeses from which to choose. A good cheese shop, or a well-stocked cheese section in a gourmet shop, may offer several dozen or even a few hundred. So, even a little bit of knowledge can help you navigate what can be some pretty confusing waters.

Here are a few ideas to help you keep on course...

1. Introduce yourself to your local cheese purveyor. A good fromager or cheese seller gets to know his clientele and their

preferences. For instance, some people simply don't like "stinky" cheese, but that doesn't mean there aren't numerous types they'd love. A good cheese seller will help you narrow the field — hard vs. fresh, assertive vs. subtle, etc. — in a way that ultimately will please your palate.

2. Build off your knowledge. It's human nature to stick with things

that we like, but that also limits our experiences. Tell a cheese seller what you normally enjoy, and ask for something similar — or choose one yourself. Most cheese counters are organized by style.

3. If you're planning to serve a cheese plate, mix it up. The combinations are limitless, but you may want to consider a semifirm cow's milk cheese, a hard Spanish goat's milk cheese and a fresh French goat's milk cheese as a starting point.

4. Buy fresh. A

cheese's aroma can take over a refrigerator so, if possible, shop on the day you plan to dine.

A cheese's aroma can take over a refrigerator. If possible, shop on the day you plan to dine.

BEING GREEN

Napa Valley's Spring Mountain Vineyard takes "green" seriously, having always practiced sustainable agriculture. The 225 acres of estate vineyard, scattered over 845 acres of pristine land, in many ways resembles a national park. The natural beauty — the pure mountain streams, groves of virgin redwoods and abundant wildlife — remind Spring Mountain's owners of their responsibility to protect it. Among the policies and practices followed are no herbicides or insecticides, the release of beneficial insects, the use of cover crops to control erosion, and following a "no till" program to preserve precious topsoil.



The Salad Days of Summer

The salad season has arrived. As the weather warms up, even those not on diets begin to gravitate away from soups and toward salads for a satisfying meal.

Salads can present challenges for wine lovers, however. Many of us order a vinaigrette dressing without even thinking about it, and that creates the most perplexing wine pairing conundrum of all because of the vinaigrette's high acid content — a quality that can render a wine flat and flabby.

Fortunately, there are a handful of wines that work with vinaigrette. One would be a high-acid sparkling wine. Another would be a dry Rosé. White wines that see no oak — such as most renditions of Sauvignon Blanc — also match well.

“As with any food and wine matching, it is crucial to think about the relative weight and body of each half of the partnership,” says acclaimed chef John Ash. “You don’t want a rich, oaky wine to accompany

a crisp, light cucumber and watercress salad. Nor would a crisp, grassy Sauvignon Blanc necessarily be right for a salad loaded with grilled shiitakes, duck breast and walnut oil.

“For me, the two keys to good salad and wine matches are making sure that there isn’t too much acid in the dressing and that the salad contains lots of ‘bridge’ ingredients — ingredients whose flavors and textures complement and contrast with, and in some cases mitigate, the wine.”

Add ham and cheese to your salad, and a nice Beaujolais would complement it perfectly. Toss a Caprese salad — with lots of



tomatoes, creamy mozzarella and fresh basil — and a Chianti (yes, a red wine) is called for. Often, the dressing selected provides most of a

salad’s flavor. If you’re using a creamy Roquefort dressing or enjoying a rich Caesar salad, a rich, buttery Chardonnay matches beautifully — the same Chardonnay that would be rendered dull and lifeless by a vinaigrette.

Four Seasons



WINES THAT MATCH THE SEASON.

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Placer County: Where Wine Tasting Is Pure Gold

In the foothills of the Sierra Nevada, between Sacramento and Reno, lies an emerging wine region featuring 10 boutique-sized, family-owned and operated wineries.

Each winery produces unique and intricate wines crafted from small lots of grapes ranging from Rhone-style Syrah and Spanish-style Tempranillo to Italian-style Barbera and traditional California Zinfandel.

The winemakers of Placer County are always happy and eager to share both their passion for winemaking and the fruits of their labors.

Before the Gold Rush, grain crops waved with the breeze and were harvested in western Placer County. As early as 1845, Theodore Sigard planted and harvested the first wheat grown in the county on his ranch, located south of Bear River.

Claude Chana, who came to California in 1846, discovered the region's potential for growing wheat and fruit crops. He planted peach pits and almonds as an experiment on Sigard's ranch before he discovered gold in the Auburn Ravine in 1848. Chana and Sigard created the first orchard of peaches, apples, pears, almonds and grapes.

Eventually, the streets of Lincoln and Sheridan would be choked with wagons hauling their grain to the mills. The Coon Creek, Doty's Ravine and Yankee Slough areas of western Placer County became the center for grain crops.



TOURING TIPS

In 1850, E.T. Mendenhall of Illinoistown (now Colfax), Lisbon Applegate of Applegate and Colonel

counted 5,067 fruit trees including peach, apple, pear, plum, currant, cherry, gooseberry, apricot, quince, fig and almond trees.

By the 1880s, Placer County was the leading shipper of deciduous fruits in California. The fruit industry supported the county from the 1880s until the early 1970s, when other major industries moved to the Roseville and Rocklin area, and commuters began moving to the county.

Today, the local vineyards are gaining in prominence. And while a few welcome guests by appointment only, most keep regular visitor hours.

Roseville is a good place to “set up camp” for a weekend tour of Placer County wineries. It offers an array of accommodations conveniently located along the main I-80 corridor. The usual “logo” restaurants can be found there, but the more rural towns of the region offer dining experiences not duplicated anywhere else.

Lincoln Produce Market is a great place to pick up fresh supplies — from local produce to gourmet groceries — for a picnic. Le Bilig in Auburn is a wonderful French bistro that offers take-out. At The Ridge Bar and Grill (part of a popular golf course complex in Auburn), chef Matthew Broucuret is obsessed with using Placer-grown produce in his dishes. And if it's steaks or chops you seek, the Monkey Cat Restaurant & Bar is the fine dining destination in downtown Auburn.

The area's wineries are just as eclectic, with no two specializing in exactly the same varieties. That means you're likely to discover some



William McClure of Yankee Jim's on the Foresthill Divide planted orchards. The 1856 Assessor's Report

aromas and flavors you may not have experienced before in a wine glass.

For instance, Hyatt Baumbach makes two varieties seldom seen in California: Charbono and Aglianico. Vina Castellano focuses on Spanish and Rhone varieties. A fine Viognier is crafted at Lone Buffalo Vineyards. Among the varieties found at several Placer County estates are Zinfandel and Barbera.

If you're seeking a wine country experience without the wine country traffic headaches, Placer County is pure gold.

For Further Information

Lincoln Produce Market

415 A St. • Lincoln
916-645-3322

Le Bilig

11750 Atwood Rd. • Auburn
lebiligkitchen.com

The Ridge Bar and Grill

2020 Golf Course Rd. • Auburn
530-888-7888

Monkey Cat Restaurant & Bar

805 Lincoln Way • Auburn
monkeycat.com

Hyatt Baumbach

291 Auburn Folsom Rd. • Auburn
530-305-0048

Vina Castellano

Vineyard and Winery

4590 Bell Rd. • Auburn
530-889-BULL

Lone Buffalo Vineyards

2682 Burgard Lane, Auburn
916-663-4486

Placer County Visitors Council

visitplacer.com



Antinori's Amazing Transformation Over a Mere 4 Decades

When one thinks of fine Italian wines, one of the first names that comes to mind is Antinori.

Marchese Piero Antinori represents the 25th generation at the helm of the family's esteemed vineyards.

This noble Florentine family registered with the Guild of Winemakers in 1385, but it is the

innovations made in the last 40 years that have brought the Antinori name to the forefront and earned the label worldwide renown.

Piero works closely with his three daughters, who are equally dedicated to carrying on the legacy. Their passion for winemaking echoes the family motto: "*Te Duce Proficio*," or

"The Quest for Excellence."

At the Tignanello Estate south of Florence, Antinori first planted Syrah, Pinot Nero, Sangiovese, Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc in the 1960s.

Experimenting with different blends a decade later, he pioneered the "Super Tuscan," which catapulted Italy's reputation for premium wine. "Tignanello," the original Super Tuscan, is a blend of Sangiovese, Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc whose intensely fruity and complex flavor set the tone for a new breed of exceptional Italian wines.

With breathtaking views and a charming 16th-century villa, the Tignanello Estate is an enchanting destination for wine-loving travelers. Stay at the nearby Fonte de Medici Farm House (fontedemedici.com), whose luxurious amenities include inviting suites, a wellness center and educational agri-tourism tours. Dine at the low-key Trattoria della Fonte and enjoy delicious regional specialties paired with Antinori wines.

Just south of Tignanello is the Badia a Passignano estate. Part of the ancient monastery founded in 395,



the abbey is still home to the Vallombrosano order, but Antinori owns and manages the surrounding vineyards. Visitors can tour the wine

cellars and enjoy Tuscan cuisine at Osteria di Passignano (osteriadipassignano.com).

From engaging, easy-drinking table wines to those aforementioned "Super Tuscan" bottlings, Antinori has developed an ever-growing — and absolutely deserved — following among lovers of Italian wine.

Quotes Du Jour

■ A passage from *A Movable Feast*, by Ernest Hemingway:

“It was a very Corsican wine and you could dilute it by half with water and still receive its message.”

■ Some words of wisdom from Benjamin Franklin, via Poor Richard’s Almanac:

“Take counsel in wine, but resolve afterwards in water.”

■ Not everyone hates the French. Take Voltaire, for instance:

“The effervescence of the French wine reveals the true brilliance of the French people.”

■ Here’s something to contemplate over that next glass of Chardonnay, courtesy of Horace:

“It was a wine jar when the molding began. As the wheel runs round why does it turn out a water pitcher?”

■ Japanese poet and essayist Yoshida Kenko, with some more understandable prose:

“One should write not unskillfully in the running hand, be able to sing in a pleasing voice and keep good time to music; and, lastly, a man should not refuse a little wine when it is pressed upon him.”

Q AND A

Why do some wines cost \$10 and others cost \$50? Is there really a \$40 difference in quality?

A key factor is location, location, location. In other words: real estate.

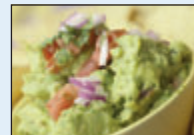


Where did the wine come from? Over the centuries that wine has been made on

purpose, farmers and vintners have learned — at first by trial and error, and more recently via scientific means — where wine grapes can be grown most successfully. Since wine regions are not unlimited expanses of land, at some point the demand for high-quality grapes from a given area will exceed the supply, and the cost of those grapes will go up. Once the grapes are harvested each year, another cost factor is what the winemaker chooses to do with them. Fermentation and aging in stainless steel tanks is the least expensive method of making wine. But if a vintner wants to add nuance to the wine’s aromas and

flavors, oak barrels are preferred. And since the influence of the oak diminishes with each successive vintage, the barrels must be replaced periodically — another cost factor. Even where the barrels are made impacts price, as French-made barrels tend to be much more expensive than barrels made elsewhere in Europe or in America. Ultimately, however, the main factor in a wine’s price is the law of supply and demand. The more a particular bottling is coveted by the public, the more it’s going to cost.

We love guacamole, but we have no idea what kind of wine would go well with it. Any suggestions?



For almost any “green” food, Sauvignon Blanc is a good place to start.

You might also try a dry sparkling wine from California, or an Italian Prosecco. (For an easy-to-make guacamole recipe, turn to page 10.)



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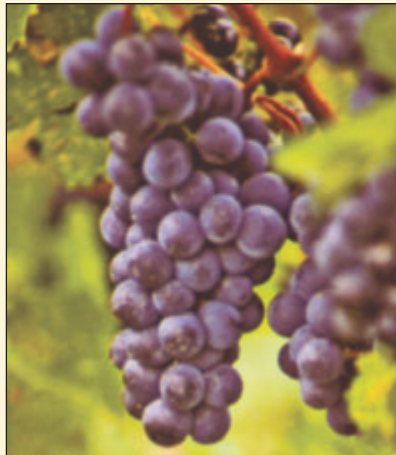


MALBEC AND SODA?

WHEN IN BUENOS AIRES...

Wine purists scoff at “wine drinks,” asserting that such concoctions are insults to the vintners who made the wine utilized. We’d probably join in the scoffing if the wine were Dom Perignon or Chateau Petrus, but we see no reason why a simple table wine couldn’t be “dressed up” a bit.

And that’s why we give high marks to the 647 Dinner Club in Buenos Aires, Argentina. There, one of the refreshing (and tasty) drinks marries a local Malbec and soda. But the specialty of the house is named for the house: A drink known as the 647 is a blend of



Rosé, Port and spiced plum juice. P.S.: The food is great, too. Among the more adventurous dishes is mascarpone and pea risotto with pistachio pesto. (And it matches beautifully with the aforementioned Malbec and soda.) 54-11-4331-3026.

**START AT STARBUCKS,
END WITH A CORKSCREW**

Coffee in the morning and wine in the evening. That may be the prescription for a long, healthy life according to several recent studies. Moderate coffee intake has been shown to be helpful in preventing diabetes, gallstones, Parkinson’s disease, cirrhosis and other disorders. Moderate wine intake — defined as

up to 5 ounces per day for women and up to 10 ounces per day for men — has been credited with reducing the risk of cardiovascular disease.

**NAPA VALLEY AND THE
GLOBAL WARMING FACTOR**

Is global warming real? Well, if it is, many of the world’s most acclaimed wine regions could be negatively impacted. If northern California were to warm by just 2 to 3 degrees over the next 50 years, the impact on the Napa Valley could be disastrous. Winegrapes love hot days, so that would be no problem, but they also require cool nights — and that’s where the potential trouble

looms. “I never like to say that Napa will be no more,” research climatologist Gregory Jones told *USA Weekend*, “but any more warming will push Napa to the upper limit of the fairly hot climates in terms of grape growing.”

**A ‘BIG APPLE’ HAVEN
FOR WINE LOVERS**

Wine lovers can electronically access information on the 600-bottle wine list at the new Adour restaurant, inside the St. Regis Hotel in New York. Adding to the allure: illuminated displays of wine bottles. The food? Well, as one Vinesse tasting panel member put it, “Does it really matter?”

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The Grapevine COOKBOOK



EASY-TO-MAKE GUACAMOLE

There is no better “appetizer” for a summertime backyard barbecue than chips and guacamole. Try this version with a well-chilled glass of Sauvignon Blanc or dry sparkling wine — and don’t be surprised if you have to go back and make more.

Ingredients

- 3 ripe avocados
- 1 vine-ripened tomato, diced
- 1/2 small onion, minced
- 1 tbs. fresh cilantro, chopped
- 1 1/2 tbs. fresh lemon or lime juice
- 1 clove garlic, minced and mashed
- 1/2 teaspoon salt

Preparation

1. Cut avocados in half and scoop flesh into a bowl.
2. Add remaining ingredients and stir until well combined.
3. Serve with your favorite kind of chips.

MOROCCAN LAMB TANGINE

Try this tasty recipe, which makes 6 servings, with Shiraz or a red blend.

Ingredients

- 4 lbs. fat-trimmed boned lamb shoulder, rinsed and cut into 1 1/2-inch chunks
- 2 onions, peeled and thinly sliced
- 4 cloves garlic, peeled and minced
- 1 tablespoon paprika
- 1 tablespoon ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon ground turmeric
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon minced fresh ginger
- 1/2 teaspoon cayenne
- 1/8 teaspoon ground cardamom
- 2 1/2 cups fat-skimmed chicken broth
- 1 can (14 1/2 oz.) diced tomatoes
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- Salt and freshly ground pepper
- Fluffy couscous (In a large bowl, mix 3 cups couscous and 3 tablespoons olive oil. Add 1 quart boiling fat-skimmed chicken broth and stir gently; cover tightly and let stand until liquid is absorbed and couscous is tender to bite, about 5 minutes. Add 1/4 cup lemon juice and salt and pepper to taste; mix and fluff with a large spoon or fork.)
- 1/3 cup pitted Kalamata olives
- 1/3 cup chopped fresh cilantro

Preparation

1. Brown lamb. Discard all but 2 tablespoons fat from the pan.
2. Add onions and garlic to pan; stir often over medium heat until onions begin to get limp, 3 to 5 minutes. Add paprika, cumin, turmeric, cinnamon, ginger, cayenne and cardamom; stir until very fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add broth, tomatoes (including juices) and tomato paste. Bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce heat, cover and simmer, stirring occasionally, until lamb is tender when pierced, about 1 hour. Skim off and discard any fat. Add salt and pepper to taste.
3. On dinner plates or a large rimmed platter, mound couscous and form a well in the center. With a slotted spoon, transfer lamb and vegetables to well. Measure pan juices; if less than 3 cups, add water to make that amount, return to pan, and bring to a boil over high heat. Add salt to taste. Pour juices into a bowl and pass to add to flavor. Scatter olives and cilantro over lamb.

Light & Sweet

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CELLAR SPECIALS

WHITE WINES *Member Price*

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2005 Skyline Cellars California Chardonnay	\$12.99
2005 Big Ass Chardonnay	\$16.99
2004 Sergio Traverso Mendoza, Argentina Chardonnay	\$16.99
2006 Don Rodolfo Salta, Argentina Torrontes	\$18.99
2006 Hope Estate Hunter Valley, Australia Chardonnay	\$18.99
2006 Henry Estate Umpqua Valley, Oregon Pinot Gris	\$19.99
2006 Ledgewood Creek Three Clones Suisun Valley, California Chardonnay	\$19.99
2006 Pennautier Vin de Pays d'Oc, France Viognier	\$19.99
NV Duval Leroy Brut Champagne	\$40.00

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2005 Kilikanoon South Australia Killermans Run Shiraz	\$22.99
2001 St. Mary's Limestone Coast, Australia House Block Cabernet Sauvignon	\$25.99
2005 Festivo Mendoza, Argentina Malbec.....	\$25.99
2004 Rotta Dino Bonesco Vineyard Cabernet Franc.....	\$26.99

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