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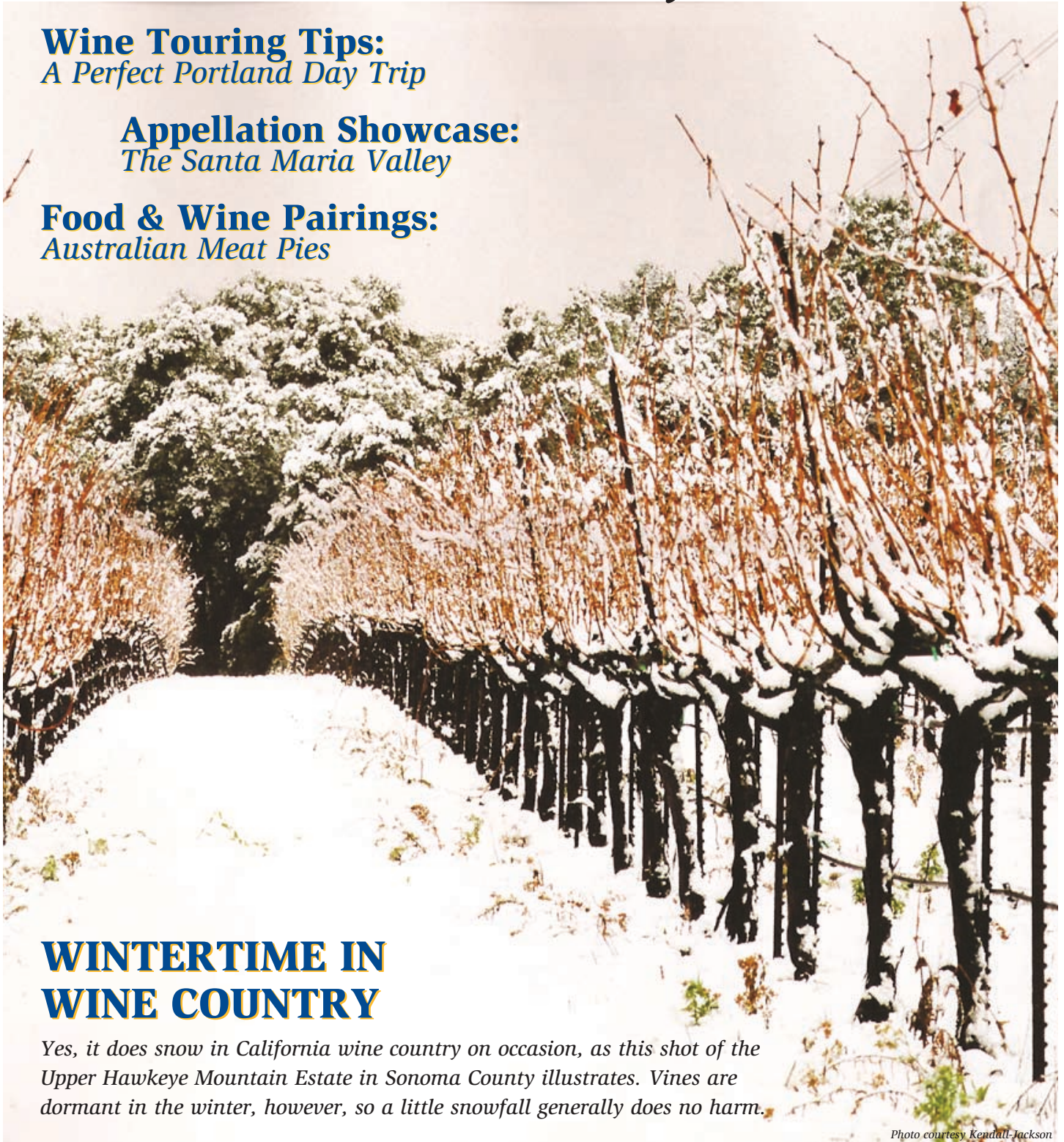
The Grapevine

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER FOR VINESSE WINE CLUB MEMBERS

Wine Touring Tips:
A Perfect Portland Day Trip

Appellation Showcase:
The Santa Maria Valley

Food & Wine Pairings:
Australian Meat Pies



WINTERTIME IN WINE COUNTRY

Yes, it does snow in California wine country on occasion, as this shot of the Upper Hawkeye Mountain Estate in Sonoma County illustrates. Vines are dormant in the winter, however, so a little snowfall generally does no harm.

Photo courtesy Kendall-Jackson

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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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EDITOR'S JOURNAL

3 Budget-Stretching Dining Destinations in Wine Country

By Robert Johnson

There is no shortage of three-star dining destinations in Napa and Sonoma counties — that special expanse of land north of the Golden Gate Bridge that we lovingly refer to as "wine country."

But about 10 years ago, I came upon a restaurant in the Napa Valley that changed my mind about wine country dining. The menu wasn't all that extensive, but the food was expertly prepared, the service was top-rate, and the check was reasonable. Better still, no corkage fee was charged to patrons who wanted to drink a bottle they'd purchased earlier in the day or been saving for a special occasion.

The restaurant was — and is — the Rutherford Grill, and I have dined there on every visit to the valley since. Most of the time, I'm surrounded by local winemakers who are taking their families or clients out for a good meal — no doubt influenced by that generous corkage policy.

I also try to check out other restaurants, generally leaving the ultra-chic, ultra-pricey destinations to those with more fully funded 401k accounts than mine. Here are three affordable spots that quickly have become personal favorites...

• **NapaStyle Paninoteca & Wine Bar.**

This is a gourmet store in Yountville that also offers casual wining and dining. It's about as laid-back as dining can be, and the various panini choices are tasty and reasonably priced. A great place to stock up for a wine country picnic, too. 707-945-1229

• **Diavola Pizzeria & Salumeria.**

Another restaurant with a name that tells you what's inside. The salumi



and sausages, cured in-house, are amazing. The restaurant is a bit out of the way, in the northern Sonoma County town of Geyserville, but worth the drive. 707-814-0111

• **Scopa.** A new addition to the Healdsburg town square dining scene, this restaurant specializes in Italian small plates (pizzas, antipasti, pastas, meat dishes) that are wonderfully flavored and satisfying. 707-433-5282



Elevated Thinking: No Slippery Slope

Given a choice between working with grapes grown on a valley floor or in a hillside vineyard, nine out of 10 winemakers would opt for the “mountain” fruit.

A “vertical slope” is a winemaker’s best friend in producing grapes that ultimately will be expressive in the wine glass. There are three main reasons for this:

1. The stress on the grapevines is greater.

In our personal lives, stress — when too much is present too often — can lead to health issues. But when it comes to growing grapes for use in winemaking, a stressed vine is desirable. There is a direct relationship between the amount of stress a vine receives and the concentration of aromas and flavors in the grapes it produces.

Hillside vines tend to be stressed in two ways — through the natural drainage provided by the slope, which keeps

the water supply down, and the generally thinner topsoil. The combination limits vine vigor and results in more concentrated grapes — and, ultimately, better wine.

2. Sun exposure is greater.

Geometry tells us that a vineyard planted on a 37% south slope will receive 113.6% more sunlight than a vineyard planted on flat land. Each variety requires a certain number of heat-degree days in order to develop and ripen fully, and a vineyard sited on a hillside

benefits from that extra sunlight.

3. Higher elevations are warmer... up to a point, of course.

When we speak of “mountain fruit” in wine country, we’re not talking about the Rocky Mountains.

But elevation does matter. Because cold air is denser and heavier than warm air, vineyards planted in “uplands” help limit damage that can be caused by late spring and early fall cold snaps — the cold air tends to flow down to the lower elevations.



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**IT'S NOT FOR EVERYONE.
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Vinesse created the Élevant Society to meet members' demands for super-premium wines. While virtually all members of the original American Cellars Wine Club were very satisfied with their monthly selections, some wanted more, and they were willing to pay for it.

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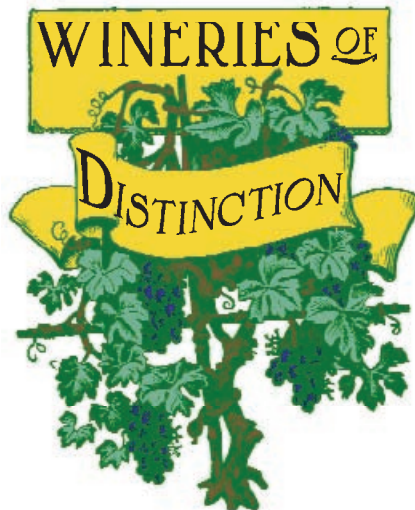
FREQUENCY:

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PRICE:

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Small Canvass, Big Statement

Kenwood's New Artist Series Cab Features the Artwork of Shepard Fairey.

After three decades in the limelight, Kenwood Vineyards Artist Series Cabernet reigns as a supreme marriage of fine art and fine wine.

The artistry displayed on the bottle and within makes each new Artist Series release an event, and every Artist Series vintage a prime collectible. Yet the people at Kenwood Vineyards have always seen the Artist Series collection as a work in progress, with each vintage a unique opportunity to excel.

A key to the success of the Artist Series is a wine every bit as compelling as its label. Drawing primarily on hillside vineyards in the Mayacamas Mountains, Kenwood meticulously crafts each Cabernet Sauvignon to be an ultimate expression of the vintner's art. Over the years, the Artist Series Cabernet has evolved in style, but

never wavered in quality.

The Artist Series originated in 1978 when Kenwood Vineyards — then in business only eight years — commissioned local artist David Lance Goines to create an original work to grace its first Reserve-style 1975 Cabernet Sauvignon. The idea was to create an elegant, distinctive package that would showcase outstanding art.

The image Goines created featured a beautiful naked woman on a vineyard slope. When the 1975 "Naked Lady" label was submitted to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms for approval, Kenwood received the following reply:

"The drawing of the young lady must be deleted. More specifically, the Bureau regards the picture as 'obscene and indecent' under regulations 27CFR 4.39(a)3."

Only 228 bottles with the "Naked Lady" label were permitted to leave the winery. A second, tongue-in-cheek label featuring a skeleton in place of the young woman also was rejected.



The label eventually approved showed only a grassy hillside with a stream running by, but the notoriety and rarity of the original design launched the Artist Series in a big way.

During its first decade, the Artist Series focused on works by contemporary artists. The 1987 vintage broke with tradition by featuring a painting by Joan Miro, and in the years since, the Artist Series has presented art by other important artists from the past, including Pablo Picasso, Henry Miller, Alexander

Calder, Tamara De Lempicka and Vincent Van Gogh. The 2004 vintage features “Peace Woman,” a work specially created for the 30th anniversary by artist Shepard Fairey.

The works range in style from impressionist and romantic to modern and abstract, with Kenwood Vineyards redesigning the label annually to enhance the presentation. The variety of dimensions, shapes, orientations and backgrounds add drama to the Artist Series package and reinforce the unique character of the collection.

‘Peace Woman’ Focuses on Nurturing Side of Humanity

Fine wine and street art may not be a typical combination, but Kenwood’s 30th legendary Artist Series Cabernet Sauvignon masterfully brings them together on the wine’s commemorative label, featuring work by famed artist Shepard Fairey.

Although a bottle of Cabernet Sauvignon seems like an unlikely canvas for Fairey’s bold and edgy works of art, the 2004 Artist Series succeeds in capturing the quiet power frequently expressed in his paintings and projects.

The “Peace Woman” is a symbolic representation of the peaceful, nurturing side of humanity, perfectly complementing the complexity and contrasting nuances of the Cabernet Sauvignon, which has a delicate balance between bold flavors and subtleties of Sonoma terroir.

Considering himself a populist, Fairey — sometimes referred to

as the “Andy Warhol of today’s generation” — is known for his works which range from absurdist propaganda to clandestine street art and commercial projects. Fairey’s signature portrait of Andre the Giant is recognized in the fully-fledged OBEY campaign as a symbol that questions the slogans and images facing society on a daily basis. The well known “Hope” posters with the iconic Barack Obama illustration strewn on walls across America indicate the prevalence that Fairey has created with his poignant images. His work combines a

formidable palette of international, historical and artistic references exemplified in his bold, graphic imagery, which inspires critical thinking among its viewers.

Each vintage of the Kenwood Artist Series has become a coveted collectible, illustrated clearly by the Robb Report sale of the series’ 25-year vertical for \$100,000.



Four Seasons



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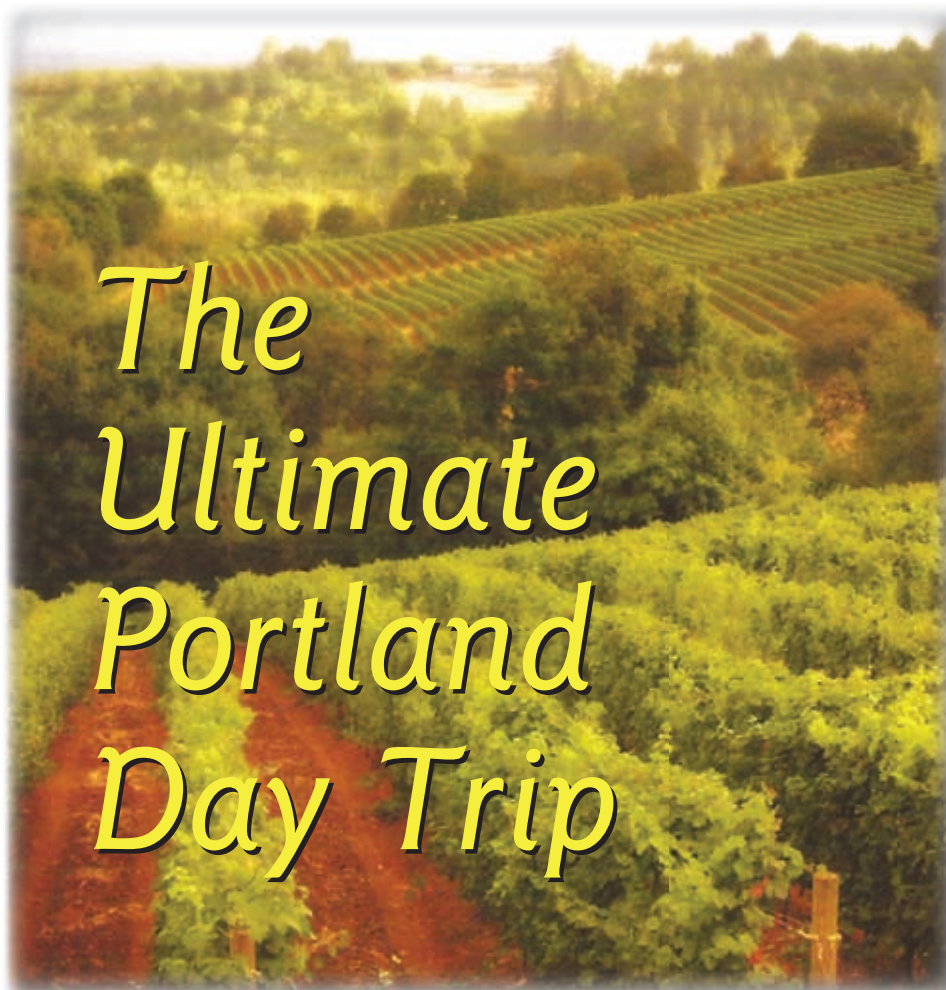
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PRICE:
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The Ultimate Portland Day Trip

There now are so many wineries in Oregon that one could spend weeks going from tasting room to tasting room and still not visit them all.

But truth be told, few among us have the time to even attempt such a sojourn. More likely, we might have a single free day while on a business trip to Portland. The good news is that a day trip from Portland offers plenty to see, do... and taste. Highway 99W provides a (mostly) scenic path with (mostly) traffic-free driving, particularly during the non-summer months.

If you have an extra day or two, make a reservation at the four-room Carlton Inn, a restored 1915 home that's within walking distance of several wineries, restaurants and



TOURING TIPS

unique shops. Located in the small town of (you guessed it) Carlton, its rooms are tastefully decorated, and its gourmet breakfasts are delicious and filling — not a bad thing when a day of wine tasting beckons.

Otherwise, head south on 99W from your Portland hotel, and make August

The 'big city' of this region is McMinnville, where the International Pinot Noir Festival is held each year.

Cellars your first stop. Several small wineries, lacking tasting rooms of their own, are housed there, and there always is a wide array of wines for visitors to sample.

The next stop: Rex Hill, which has new owners, but maintains the founders' commitment to organic farming. The 2008 harvest was Rex Hill's 25th.

Another stop where you can sample multiple brands is Ponzi Vineyards in Dundee. In addition to the very good Ponzi wines, the facility offers rarities from nearby small estates, as well as microbrews, gourmet coffee and light fare.

South of the town of Dundee and north of Lafayette, you'll encounter Sokol Blosser Winery, founded in 1971 and certified organic since 2005. Second-generation family members Alex and Alison Sokol-Blosser now run the day-to-day business, and as is the case at so many Oregon wineries, Pinot Noir is their specialty.

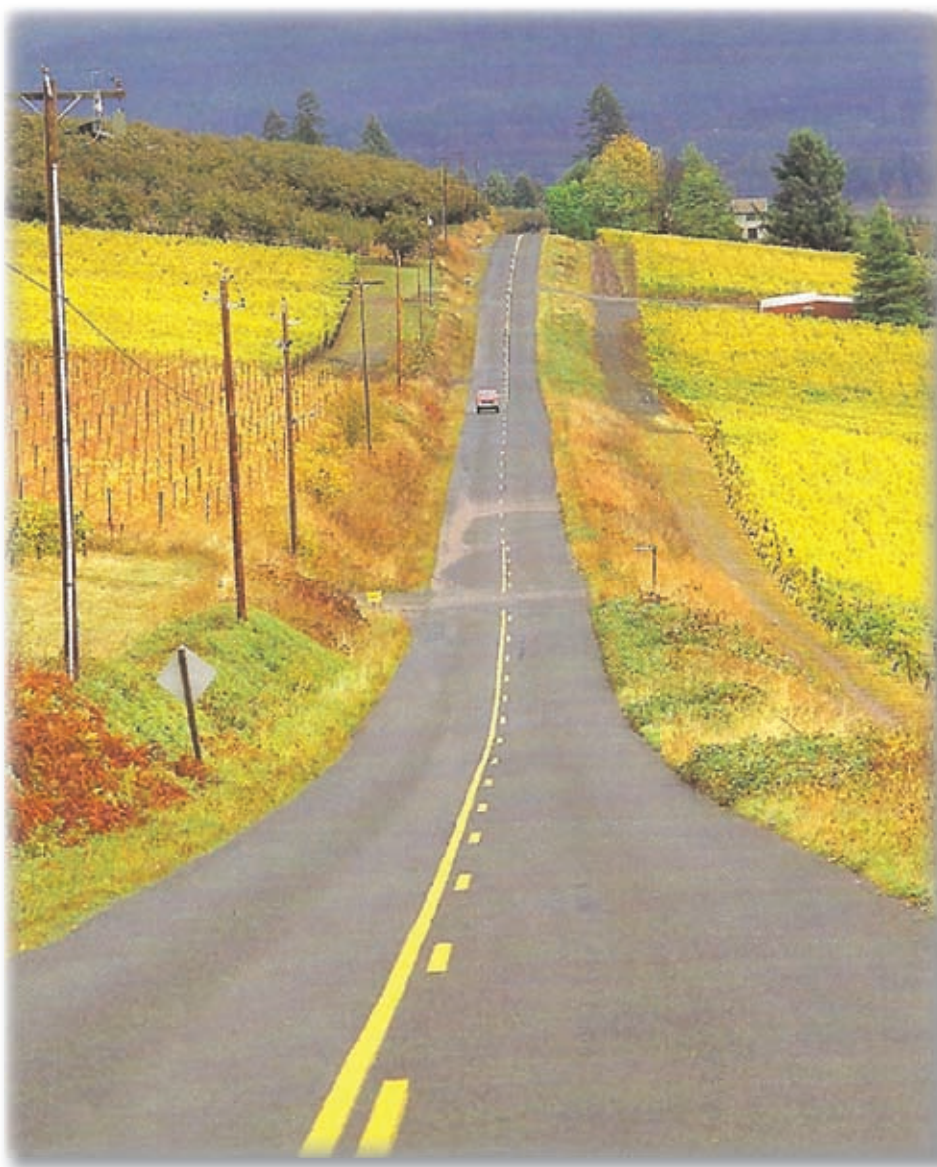
The "big city" of this region is McMinnville, where the International Pinot Noir Celebration is held each July. Near McMinnville are several acclaimed estates, including Elk Cove Vineyards (known for single-vineyard bottlings of Pinot Noir), Kramer Vineyards (a sparkling wine specialist), and Lazy River Vineyard (which makes great wines and also supplies grapes to other acclaimed wineries).

If you'd like to plan a longer stay, consider visiting the area on either the Memorial Day or Thanksgiving

weekend, when many of the wineries not normally open to the public welcome visitors.

While it's true that the roads will be more crowded than at other times of

the year, those open houses provide rare opportunities to sample wines made in quantities too small even for artisan-focused wine clubs such as the Élevant Society.



VINESSE

Hot LIST

1 Hot Wine Country Scooter Tour — Vespa scooters provide the mode of transportation during seven-day expeditions through the gorgeous vineyards and quaint villages of central Tuscany. A number of winery stops are included on the “Italy by Vespa” itinerary. 866-297-7725

2 Hot Wine-Focused Steakhouses — Everything is bigger in Texas, so the saying goes, and that certainly applies to the wine lists at the Pappas Bros. Steakhouses in Dallas and Houston. Steaks, of course, are the stars at Pappas Bros. They're dry aged and hand-cut on the premises. But the depth and breadth of the wine choices also is impressive, with more than 2,500 selections at the Dallas location (214-366-2000) and more than 1,800 in Houston (713-780-7352).

3 Hot Wine Region — Visiting the Wachau Valley of Austria is like stepping back in time, as each village tries to outdo the others in preserving the local history and landmarks. Numerous wineries and wine-focused restaurants provide ample tasting opportunities. austria.info

4 Hot Winter Escape — New Orleans is back, and so is Mardi Gras, scheduled for Feb. 15-24. Numerous downtown restaurants offer a break from the ceaseless revelry with post-hurricane, rebuilt wine lists. 800-672-6124

For Further Information

The Carlton Inn
Carlton, Ore.
503-852-7506

Ponzi Vineyards
Dundee, Ore.
503-628-1227

Elk Cove Vineyards
Gaston, Ore.
877-ELK-COVE

Willamette Valley Open Houses
503-646-2985

August Cellars
Newberg, Ore.
503-554-6766

Sokol-Blosser
Dundee, Ore.
503-864-2282

Kramer Vineyards
Gaston, Ore.
503-662-4545

Rex Hill
Newberg, Ore.
800-739-4455

International Pinot Noir Celebration
McMinnville, Ore.
800-775-4762

Lazy River
Yamhill, Ore.
503-852-6100



Check out the new “Food and Wine Pairings” feature on page 11. Meanwhile, we devote this issue’s “A-to-Z” to food terms...

Amandine. French term meaning “garnished with almonds.”

Barquette. A boat-shaped pastry shell that can contain a savory filling (when served as an appetizer) or a sweet filling (for a dessert).

Compote. A chilled dish of fresh or dried fruit that has been slowly cooked in a sugar syrup. Can be served as an accompaniment to certain meat and fowl dishes.

Dutch oven. A large pot or kettle with a tight-fitting lid so steam can’t readily escape.

Escalope. French term for a thin, flattened slice of meat or fish. (This cut is known as “scallop” in the U.S.)

VINESSE STYLE

ARTISAN AMERICAN CHEESE

Whether serving a cheese plate as an appetizer or a dessert course, there are plenty of finely crafted American renditions that will delight your palate and save you a few bucks when compared to many imports.



Listed from mild to assertive, here are some of the choices:

- **Mild cow’s milk.** It’s difficult to beat a melt-in-your-mouth triple-crème. Among the American brands to seek out: Picolo, Largo and Fleur de Lis.

- **Soft or semi-soft washed-rind.** The ubiquitous Red Hawk has been joined in recent years by brands such as Grayson, ColoRouge and Hooligan.

- **Sheep’s milk.** Look for renditions such as Tomme de Brebis, Sally Jackson (wrapped in chestnut leaves), Vermont Shepherd, Willow Hill Farm and Hidden Spring.

- **Goat’s milk.** Humboldt Fog, Trillium, Wabash Cannonball and Truffle Tremor are great choices.

- **Alpine-style.** Try a sweet and nutty cheese that has a name like a fine wine — Pleasant Ridge Reserve — or ask for Trailhead Tomme, Tarentlaise or Fleur de la Terre.

- **Cheddar.** Whether you’re noshing on Hook’s, Fiscalini Bandaged, Cabot Clothbound or Shelburne, American cheddar is not just for burgers anymore.

- **Blue.** Rogue River Blue, Great Hill Blue and Bayley Hazen Blue are among America’s most sought-after renditions.

- **Hard.** Nicely aged versions include Vella Dry Jack, Winchester Gouda and a goat cheese known as Capricious.



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APPELLATION SHOWCASE



Within the foothills of California's Central Coast you'll find the picturesque Santa Maria Valley — home to some of California's most famous vineyards and most respected winemakers.

In the Santa Maria Valley, many of the vineyards are sprawling, and home to a wide array of grape varieties including Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and others.

It's no surprise that wine grapes have emerged as Santa Barbara County's No. 1 agricultural crop, with more than 19,000 acres of vineyards planted. And in the Santa Maria Valley area of the county, some of America's best bottlings of Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Syrah are crafted.

The valley possesses the rare geographic feature of running east-west. This helps channel cool air into the region, creating mild temperatures throughout the year. Vine-damaging frost is a rarity in the Santa Maria Valley. And because of the general coolness, the growing season lasts about a month longer than in other areas of the state, providing plenty of "hang time" for the grapes to develop fully.

Another factor in the quality of Santa Maria Valley grapes is the soil. It's more porous than found elsewhere, and also drains extremely well. This restricts vine vigor and concentrates flavors in the grapes.

Add a cadre of experienced, dedicated vintners — including Daniel Gehrs, Tom Williams, Ken Brown, Chuck Carlson, Eli Parker, Bill Wathen, Dick Dore and Chuck Ortman — to the mix, and the wines of the Santa Maria Valley are among the most sought-after anywhere.

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30

Length, in miles, of California's Napa Valley, Bordeaux's Medoc region in France, and Burgundy's Cote d'Or.

“My manner of living is plain. A glass of wine and a bit of mutton are always ready, and such as will be content to partake of that are always welcome.”

— George Washington



Q I saw a restaurant server decanting a bottle of 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon the other night. I thought decanting was just for older wines. What was going on?

A Decanting is used for older bottles in order to separate any sediment that may have developed in the bottle from the wine. With younger wines, decanting is used more for aeration, to help the wine “open up” in aroma and flavor. The “bigger” the wine — as a young California Cabernet or Zinfandel may be — the more it can benefit from decanting. In the market for a decanting device? A popular tool is the Vinturi Wine Aerator, available for \$39.95 at vinturi.com.

STERLING TRAM GOES ‘GREEN’

Sterling Vineyards in the Napa Valley has converted its famed aerial tram to solar energy, *Beverage World* reports. Each year, the tram carries more than 200,000 visitors to the Sterling winery, which is perched 300 feet above the town of Calistoga, Calif. “Sterling has long had a commitment to sustainable farming practices and a concern for preserving our unique Napa environment,” says Michael Westrick, vice president of winemaking for Sterling Vineyards. “The conversion of the Sterling tram to clean, renewable solar power just makes environmental and economic sense. This is another step in our overall commitment to increase our conservation efforts.” There are 336 solar panels installed on the roof of the Sterling Vineyards Reserve Winery, located at the bottom of the hill and throughout the winery grounds. The panels will generate enough energy to power nearly eight average homes and save 33 tons of greenhouse gasses annually, or 821 tons over the course of 25 years. The system is equivalent to planting 11.3 acres of trees, the company says.

HEALTH BEAT: PER USUAL, EVERYTHING IN MODERATION

Drinking in moderation, combined with an active lifestyle, is a combination that helps keep heart disease at bay. That’s the conclusion drawn by a study conducted by the University of Southern Denmark. Those who don’t drink and don’t keep active had a 30 to 49 percent higher risk of developing heart disease than people who drink, exercise or do both. Wine, with its lower alcohol level, was seen as the most “healthful” of adult beverages. Those who drink heavily did not derive the same benefit, and had just as much heart disease as non-drinkers.

GETTING A TABLE IN A CROWDED RESTAURANT

You need to get to a play or a movie or a concert, and you have only so much time for dinner. But when you get to the restaurant you’ve selected, you find there’s a two-hour wait. What to do? There are two basic options: 1. Check out the bar, and see if seats are available. If they are, ask whether the entire menu is available. Many better restaurants use their bar as an “overflow” dining room, which is good for everybody. 2. Negotiate. If you look around the dining room and see empty tables, chances are they’re reserved for a specific party at a specific time. Offer to vacate the table at an agreed-upon time in exchange for immediate seating. Just be sure to mean what you say, and be prepared to eat dessert at the bar.

FOOD & WINE PAIRINGS

AUSTRALIAN MEAT PIES

What, exactly, is an Australian meat pie? Quite simply stated, it's a pie... with meat inside.

The most famous purveyor of this Down Under tradition is Harry's Café de Wheels, a van that sits just steps from the wharf in the Sydney neighborhood of Woolloomooloo. Sydney's "Hopper" tour buses have a stop just steps away, enabling tourists to join the locals in eating what has become an Australian tradition.

Harry's offers an array of meat-filled pies, including the most traditional of all: lamb. Among other fillings offered are tender, lean steak and nothing but vegetables. The latter sort of defeats the purpose of a meat pie, we suppose, but it's a tasty option for the non-carnivores among us.

The Australian meat pie may be round, the shape of a half-circle or even square. But regardless of the shape, it's intended to be hand-

held and consumed without utensils. Think of it as the Aussie version of the American hot dog — a satisfying snack to get you through the afternoon.

Most of the pies include gravy, some include mashed potatoes, and many include small portions of veggies such as carrots and peas. And because most

are eaten on the fly, the most common beverage consumed with the Aussie meat pie is a soft drink or, simply, water.

But it should be noted that there are wine options as well. With almost any of the meat versions, an Aussie Shiraz (a.k.a. Syrah) matches beautifully. For the veggie pie, a nice, chilled Sauvignon Blanc or Semillon (or a blend of the two varieties) would be perfect.

For those who want to enjoy a glass of vino with their Harry's meat pie, plan to arrive at the Sydney airport a few minutes early for your return flight. There's a Harry's outpost there.



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PORK TENDERLOIN WITH CRANBERRY GLAZE

Here's a dish that's delicious with Riesling or Gewurztraminer, but because of the sauce, also matches well with Rhone-style red blends. This recipe makes 4 servings.

Ingredients

- 1 teaspoon cumin
- 1 teaspoon ground coriander
- 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1 pork tenderloin, about 1-lb.
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 can (15-oz.) jellied cranberry sauce
- 1 teaspoon Moroccan harissa sauce
- 2 cups couscous
- 1/4 cup chopped cilantro

Preparation

1. Heat oven to 400 degrees.
2. Mix together cumin, coriander, paprika, salt and pepper on a plate. Roll the pork in the spices to coat all sides.
3. Heat oil in a medium oven-safe skillet over high heat, and cook pork to lightly sear all sides, about 3 minutes.
4. Place skillet in oven, and roast until thermometer reads 150 degrees, about 15 minutes.
5. Meanwhile, cook couscous according to package directions.
6. Remove skillet from oven to stove top, and transfer pork to platter. Add cranberry sauce and harissa to skillet, and cook over medium heat, stirring up browned bits, until smooth, about 2 minutes.
7. Spoon couscous around pork. Spoon cranberry sauce over pork. Sprinkle with cilantro.

BEEF RIB-EYE WITH SWEET ONION TOPPING

This dish pairs beautifully with Syrah (a.k.a. Shiraz), as well as Cabernet Sauvignon, Zinfandel, and red blends. This recipe makes 4 servings.

Ingredients

- 2 large beef rib-eye steaks, trimmed
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground pepper
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1 large sweet onion, halved, thinly sliced
- 2 sprigs fresh tarragon, chopped

Preparation

1. Season steaks on both sides with half of the salt and half of the pepper. Set side.
2. Melt the butter in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the onion. Cook, stirring often, until tender and beginning to brown, about 10 minutes.
3. Add tarragon and cook, stirring often, for 2 minutes.
4. Stir in remaining salt and pepper, and transfer to small serving bowl.
5. Heat skillet over high heat, and add steaks. Cook until browned, about 3 minutes. Turn, and again cook until browned, also about 3 minutes.
6. Reduce heat to medium-low, and cook to desired doneness, about 5 minutes for medium.
7. Transfer steaks to cutting board, and let rest 5 minutes. Cut steaks in half, or slice if desired. Serve with reserved onion topping.

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