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The Grapevine

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER FOR VINESSE WINE CLUB MEMBERS

A Wine Drinker's Restaurant Bill of Rights

**It's a Dirty Job:
The Role of Soil
in Winemaking**

**Exploring the Inland
Empire of California**

**The Secrets of
El Dorado
Wine Country**

**Vinesse Style:
Picnic Essentials**

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Chief Operating Officer (aka "The Buck Stops Here"):
Lawrence D. Dutra

Editor:
Robert Johnson

Wine Steward:
Katie Montgomery

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EDITOR'S JOURNAL

A Wine Drinker's Bill of Rights

When Dining Out, Expectations Should Be High

By Robert Johnson

These are not the best of times for America's restaurants, which means that when we dine out, we should expect truly exceptional service — the kind of service that would encourage us to return sooner rather than later.

Toward that end, I would like to propose a "Wine Drinker's Bill of Rights." These principles embrace the tenets of good service that help assure a positive wining-and-dining experience. You might want to photocopy this page, take it with you the next time you eat out, and use it to gauge the restaurant's level of service.

• **The right to pay only once.** If your party has a round of drinks at the bar prior to being seated, you should not be asked to "close out the tab." The restaurant should have a system in place to seamlessly transfer the bill, and a policy that assures the bar staff gets its fair share of the gratuity.

• **The right to be given a wine list for each adult at the table.** At too many restaurants, when a couple dines out and asks for a wine list, that list is automatically presented to the man. Look, if I'm dining out with renowned vintner Heidi Barrett, I want *her* to pick the wine. Better still, why not provide each adult with a copy of the list? That's a great way to spark conversation and help select a wine that everyone might like.

• **The right of refusal.** If a wine is corked or otherwise tainted, the

restaurant should replace it without question. At the same time, a diner should not send a perfectly good bottle back simply because it's not to his liking.

• **The right to be given a proper pour level.** A half-filled glass is a good standard.

• **The right to base the tip on the level of service, not the price of the bottle.** It involves no more service to open a \$300 bottle of wine than a \$50 bottle. Diners should feel free to base their tip on a "base price" of no more than \$50 per bottle.





Successful Grape Growing: It's a Dirty Job...

How much of a role does soil play in the health and vigor of winegrapes and, ultimately, in the quality of wine?

Like so many things vinous, it depends on who you ask.

Let's start with the French. In France, soil provides the very basis of quality assessment and plays the key role in the concept of *terroir*. In fact, the country's entire *appellation controlee* system is based on *terroir* — and, by extension, soil. It's no mere legend or exaggeration when we hear of an experienced French vintner who can tell where the grapes were grown simply by smelling the finished wine.

Keep in mind that through much of recorded history, the vineyards of Europe — and, in particular, France — were quite small. Thus, over years and decades, recognizable traits could be identified in the finished wines. Quality levels also varied, so certain sites were considered more



“noble” than others, and the roles of soil and *terroir* were underscored.

In the New World, the role of soil plays second... or perhaps even third... fiddle to the differences in regional climate, known as the *macroclimate*. U.S. wine regions are defined by their air temperature ranges and the number of days of sunshine they receive per annum.

Still, soil plays an important role, but not for the reason you may suspect. It's not so much about the soil's nutrients as its draining capabilities. Ultimately, the best soils for growing grapes allow a steady flow of water to the vines — but only a moderate amount. The best grapes for making wine come from “stressed” vines. Too much water results in too much vine vigor, and grapes that are “watered down” in flavor. So, when planting grapevines, growers and vintners look for the presence of drainage-assisting stones and rock in the soil.



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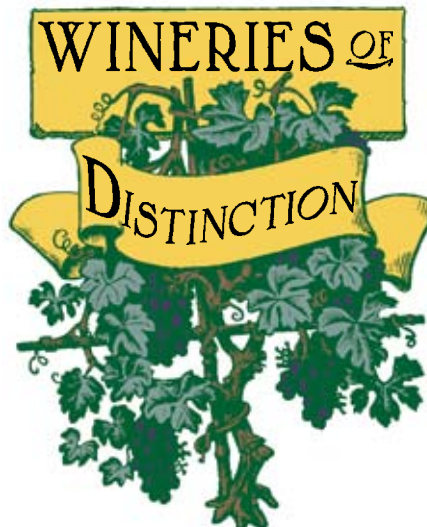
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***A**mericans have long had a love affair with horses, from the tale of *Black Beauty* to the modern "Triple Crown" races and even embracing *Mr. Ed*.*

And so it is in wine country, where a number of estates embrace the equestrian lifestyle and even include horse imagery in their names and/or logos. Among them are Black Stallion Winery along Napa Valley's Silverado Trail, and Bridlewood Estate Winery in the Santa Ynez Valley of Santa Barbara County.

Located on the grounds of an historic equestrian center, Black Stallion Winery opened its doors in July of 2007 in Napa's Oak Knoll District. The facility was renovated with reclaimed materials

and luxurious furnishings to evoke the rugged sophistication of early California.

Fifty years ago, the Silverado Horseman's Center covered 32 acres and included an indoor riding track, as well as an outdoor arena with seating for 3,000. The property also boasted a half-mile racetrack, recreation buildings, a private paddock, riding trails and a stallion breeding station.

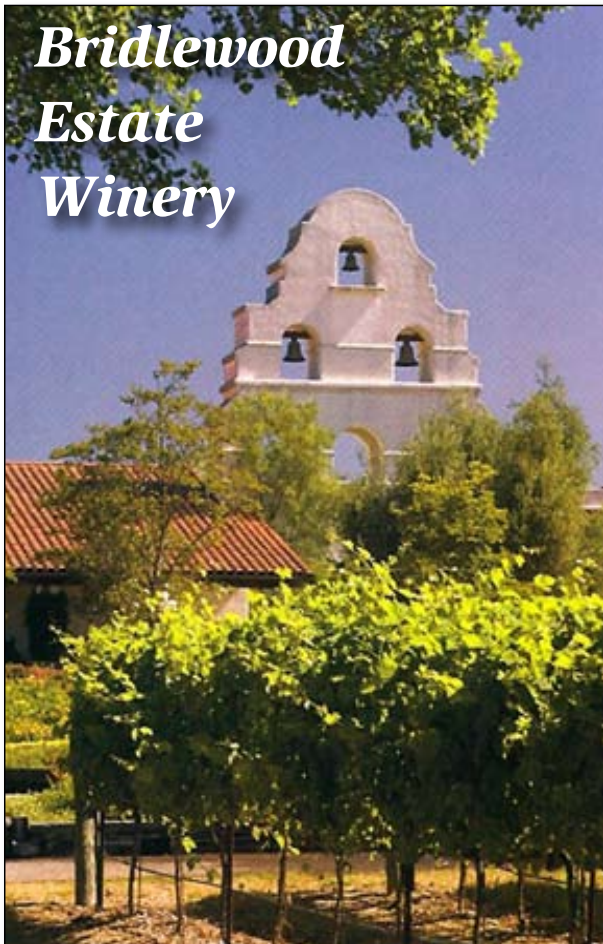
Remnants of the 36 original horse stalls can still be seen on the stone walls of the facility, which is being retrofit to house the winery's production operations.

"Our aim as a winery," notes Black Stallion President Laina Brown, "is to craft wines that reflect the attributes of this dynamic region and to deliver them directly to our customers."

Toward that end, production is purposely kept low. Although Black Stallion presently crafts nine different



Bridlewood Estate Winery



not in every vineyard.” So he travels from viticultural area to viticultural area, seeking out grapes with specific attributes that would contribute to his “mind’s eye” cuvee.

While Hopkins makes a number of varieties for Bridlewood, he has a particularly deft touch with Syrah. In fact, he makes seven different and distinct bottlings from that one variety.

Why so many? Because the various microclimates of the Central Coast region — some cold, some warm; some windy, some not — produce Syrah grapes possessing strikingly different aromas and flavors. Yet each of Hopkins’ seven bottlings offers generous texture, complexity and elegance.

varietal wines — including a Cabernet Sauvignon, a Chardonnay, a rosé and a dessert wine — its total case count is a mere 3,800.

Well down California’s coast, just north of the resort town of Santa Barbara, Rhone varieties take center stage at Bridlewood Estate Winery in Santa Ynez.

The 105-acre estate was a horse ranch before being transformed into a working winery. Specifically, it was a place where local horse owners brought their injured animals to be rehabilitated. The traditions of California’s past are echoed by the mission-style winery with its long, cool verandas surrounding a stone courtyard, graced by the sounds of fountains splashing in the sun.

Winemaker David Hopkins takes a unique approach to his craft, “tasting” blends in his head as he tastes wine grapes from all over the Central Coast region each harvest season.

“It’s a vintage year every year in California,” Hopkins explains. “Just

Whether visiting Black Stallion Winery in the Napa Valley or Bridlewood Estate Winery in the Santa Ynez Valley, one needn’t be a genius to recognize the exceptional winemaking. All it takes is a little horse sense.

Winery 4-1-1

Black Stallion Winery

4089 Silverado Trail
Napa, Calif.
707-253-1400

Winemaker:
Elaine St. Clair

Bridlewood Estate Winery

3555 Roblar Ave.
Santa Ynez, Calif.
805-688-9000

Winemaker:
David Hopkins

Four Seasons



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Where the Southland's Wine Heritage Lives On

Three Inland Empire Families Continue to Make Wines That Are Packed With Personality

Grapes have been grown and wine has been made in Southern California's Inland Empire for generations.

But it wasn't until March 31, 1995 that the United States Treasury Department's Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms granted the Cucamonga Valley official viticultural area status. This was the result of a petition written and filed by Gino L. Filippi on behalf of the local vintners and growers. The approval enabled wineries to use the words "Cucamonga Valley" on their wines that utilize at least 85% Cucamonga Valley grapes.

Now in its 87th year, Joseph Filippi Winery & Vineyards is in the hands of fourth- and fifth-generation family members — J.P. and his son Jared.

The Filippi family has grown premium wine grapes in the Cucamonga area continuously since 1922. In keeping with the city of Rancho Cucamonga's commitment to honor its viticultural heritage, the winery is involved in ongoing restoration and preservation.

Since 1994, the Filippis have revitalized old vineyards and undertaken new plantings in an area continuously threatened by Southern California's urban sprawl. They also continue working to restore the historic Ellena Bros./Regina Winery in conjunction with the city.

Filippi wines are the result of craftsmanship derived from tradition,



Vintners Joseph & Jared Filippi

passion, skill and artistry. The winery remains true to the family's heritage of excellence, making limited-production releases of varieties ranging from Riesling to Cabernet Sauvignon, Orange Muscat to Cabernet Franc, and Chardonnay to Petite Sirah. Filippi also makes aged Sherries and specialty Ports, including a popular chocolate-flavored Port known as "Fondante Ciello."

The winery has a tasting and sales operation in its Rancho Cucamonga location, allowing guests to sample an array of wines served

by a knowledgeable and friendly staff. Guided tours are available Wednesdays through Sundays at 1 p.m., or by appointment.

Nearby in Mira Loma's Wineville area, on the southern fringe of the Cucamonga Valley, Galleano Winery is much the same as it was in 1927 when the Galleano family purchased the land. Six years later, following the repeal of Prohibition, they opened their winery.

The Galleano history in the United States began in 1913 when a young Domenico Galleano arrived from the Piedmont region of Italy. For 14 years, he worked and saved his money, looking for the land he saw in his mind, and not willing to settle for anything less. He found it in 1927, purchasing the Cantu Ranch which consisted of a two-story house built sometime between 1895 and 1910, a barn and several outbuildings that remain largely in their original condition. Domenico was, however, much more excited by the sandy soil of the valley, and was ready to plant his vineyards and make his dream a reality.

That reality now has spanned five generations. Today, Donald Galleano still actively farms 400 acres of grapes unique to the Cucamonga Valley, and Galleano Enterprises is the largest shipper of grapes in Southern California, moving products to other wineries throughout the state.

The Rhone varieties — Grenache, Mourvedre, Carignane and Cinsault — are in high demand by wineries as their outstanding qualities cannot be duplicated elsewhere. Cucamonga



TOURING TIPS



Don Galleano

Valley Zinfandel grapes also are sought after by some of the largest wineries in California.

Galleano uses traditional European techniques in harvesting and producing wine. The majority of its vineyards are head-pruned (free-standing) and are certified organically grown, free from herbicides and pesticides. And because the vineyards are not irrigated, the grapes have intense varietal characteristics. Galleano wines continue to win numerous awards at international wine competitions.

In 1993, the winery was designated a County Historical Landmark and a State of California Point of Historical Interest. In 2003, it was named to the National and California Registers of Historic Places.

Also in the area is a satellite tasting room for the historic downtown Los Angeles wine estate, San Antonio Winery (profiled previously in *The Grapevine*).

In addition to visiting the wineries, a good way to learn about the Inland Empire's winemaking heritage is to visit the Museum of History and Art in Ontario. Among its permanent exhibits is "Road Ways," which examines local roads and highways (including Route 66) and the area's citrus and vineyard heritage.

Admission to the museum is free, but the facility is open limited hours, so call ahead when planning a visit.

Virtually all of the national lodging chains have properties in the Inland Empire, but for a more intimate experience, consider staying at the Christmas House Bed & Breakfast Inn.

Rates begin at \$95 for the Vineyard Room, or for \$80 more, the Garden Suite includes a private brick courtyard with a gazebo-covered hot tub — a great way to wind down after a long day of wine touring.



VINESSE

Hot LIST

1 Hot Oregon B&B. About five minutes outside the town of Dundee, in the heart of Oregon's Willamette Valley, the Wine Country Farm offers a bed-and-breakfast experience on a working winery. In the morning, guests of the nine-room inn enjoy crepes. In the late afternoon, Brie and crackers are available. And on the weekends, the winery's tasting room offers samples of the vinous offerings, including a tasty Muller-Thurgau and bright and fruitful Pinot Noir. Room rates start at \$150 per night. 503-864-3446.

2 Hot Wine Country Bike Shop. For those who prefer to tour California's Napa Valley on two wheels, the Calistoga Bike Shop at the top of the valley will provide everything needed: a bicycle and a riding route that leads to six boutique wineries that welcome the non-motorized visitors with open arms and open bottles. The \$80 fee includes the bike rental and tasting fees. 707-942-9687.

3 Hot Provence Wine Cellar. Each spring at the *pl. du Palais* (or Popes' Palace), a panel of 50 experts selects the best wines of the new Cotes du Rhone releases, which then are made available for purchase in the downstairs cellar. *Next door to the Christian Etienne restaurant (10 rue de Mons) in the French town of Avignon.*

For Further Information

**Joseph Filippi
Winery & Vineyards**
12467 Base Line Rd.
Rancho Cucamonga
909-899-5755

Galleano Winery
4231 Wineville Rd.
Mira Loma
951-685-5376

**San Antonio Winery
Ontario Wineshop**
2802 S. Milliken Ave.
Ontario
909-947-3995

**Museum of
History and Art**
225 S. Euclid Ave.
Ontario
909-983-3198

**Christmas House
Bed & Breakfast**
9240 Archibald Ave.
Rancho Cucamonga
909-980-6450



Kabinett. German designation for a wine made from grapes picked during the normal harvest (as opposed to later, when sugar levels have increased). The wines typically are dry, light-bodied and low in alcohol.

Landwein. German designation for a wine superior to table wine. The French equivalent would be a *vin de pays*.

Monopole. French term for a vineyard that is under single ownership, as opposed to a corporate entity.

Nose. The aroma, or bouquet, of a wine. Swirling the wine in the glass is said to “lift the nose.”

Old World Wine. A bottling produced in the traditional winegrowing areas of Europe, including (but not restricted to) France, Italy and Germany.

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

VINESSE STYLE

PICNIC ESSENTIALS

Is there even one square mile of the country that has been totally spared from the ravages of winter in late 2008 and early 2009?

We think not. And as a result, everyone is looking forward to spring. The first time we can get outdoors with a picnic basket and a couple bottles of wine, well... we are so there.

We'll leave the food and wine selection to you. After all, the preferences for both are very personal things. But we've come up with a few “accessories” that can add to the ambience and enhance the enjoyment of your first picnic of the new year...



• **Steady Sticks.** These metal stakes go right into a lawn and provide a stable perch for your wine glasses. *About \$12.*

• **Bite Blocker Herbal Insect Repellent Wipes.** The Wet Naps-style wipes repel bugs with organic plant oils. *About \$7.50 per pack of 15.*

• **French Bull Plates and Silverware.** The funky patterns stand out, but what's really cool about the plates and silverware is that they're made from melamine — which means they won't break. *About \$28 per 16-piece set.*

• **Paddywax Travel Tin Candles.** Add a touch of romance

to the surroundings with these scented candles (mango cilantro is our favorite) that burn for up to 15 hours. *About \$5 each.*



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APPELLATION SHOWCASE

Roughly half-way between Lake Tahoe and Sacramento, surrounding California's historic Highway 50, lies a virtually undiscovered wine region known as El Dorado.

Here, the towns have welcoming names such as Pleasant Valley, Fairplay and Somerset, and several of the winery names borrow from the area's topography and history: Gold Hill Vineyard, Perry Creek, Granite Springs, Oakstone and Sierra Vista.

What sets El Dorado apart from other California wine regions is its unique combination of soils and mountain climate. As a result, the varietal mix is diverse, and the terroir lends distinct characteristics to the various wine grapes grown.

The wineries of El Dorado are sprinkled across the base of the majestic Sierra Nevada Mountains, where the green foothills meet steep granite slopes.

Virtually every estate is a candidate for a postcard, and visitors enjoy the less hurried pace that once defined the more famous Napa Valley to the west.

The freshness of spring in El Dorado is reflected in budding vines, verdant hillsides and carpets of delicate wildflowers. This is when most of the wineries unveil their new vintages, emptying the tanks and barrels for another harvest season ahead. El Dorado Zinfandel has achieved near-cult status among wine insiders, but the area also is known for its rich Cabernet Sauvignon, as well as an array of Rhone and Italian varieties.

The region provides limitless venues and opportunities for picnics during the summer months, and then when fall arrives, it's harvest festival time. El Dorado hosts a number of events dedicated to the grape as well as the region's other star crop: apples.

But regardless of the season, El Dorado vintners are warm and welcoming, and when you visit a tasting room, don't be surprised if the person pouring the wine happens to be the person who crafted it.



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“There’s a quiet revolution happening here. Go off a side road and through the woods, and you’ll find a vineyard here, a vineyard there — hundreds of acres of new vineyards are going in all over the place.”

— Joel Goldberg, editor of *MichWine.com*, on the growing wine industry in Michigan

Q We’re going to Santa Barbara wine country this April, and then will be spending a week in the Los Angeles area. Can you recommend a couple of L.A. restaurants where we could bring in a few bottles that we plan to buy in Santa Barbara?

A Sure. Try Bistro Verdu in Glendale, which focuses on French and Mediterranean cuisine. It charges a mere \$5 for corkage, and its phone number is 818-541-1532. For even more eclectic cuisine, try the fusion of Japanese, Italian and French flavors at Restaurant 2117 in West L.A. There, the corkage is \$10, as long as the bottle you bring is not on the restaurant’s list. Reservations are available at 310-477-1617. And here’s a sleeper if you’re a burger fan: 25 Degrees on Hollywood Boulevard is a fabulous burger joint that charges nothing for corkage. Call 323-785-7244 for directions.

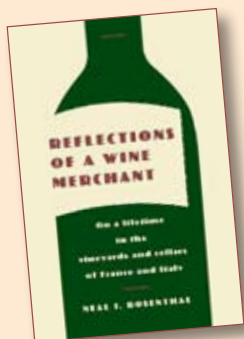


Ever drip wine on the table or, worse, a guest when pouring? The Oxo Steel wine pourer and stopper is a flared stainless steel spout that delivers wine into the glass sans the drips and dribbles. The gadget doubles as a stopper for short-term storage of any unused wine. It’s available at Sur La Table, and costs about \$10.



our existing practices in the vineyard and winery — including eliminating pesticides, using biodiesel, recycling water, reducing packaging and using recycled materials — the solar program is another important step in my family’s goal to become carbon neutral.” Eventually, plans call for 100 percent of the winery’s energy to come from solar power.

How does a winery celebrate its 150th anniversary? If the winery is Gundlach Bundschu, it installs two solar arrays on its Sonoma estate, one of which is being used to power the estate’s water reclamation system. The other array now provides about 60 percent of the winery’s energy needs. Gundlach Bundschu President Jeff Bundschu explained the investment this way: “In addition to



If you like to read about wine in addition to drinking it, check out Neal Rosenthal’s *Reflections of a Wine Merchant* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux). “With modesty aside,” the long-time wine importer told the *Los Angeles Times*, “I

would hope that the book is seen as more than about wine. It is about wine, but inside that, it’s about values, about culture, about tradition, and it’s about human failings and human triumphs. I try to use that setting to make points about how I live and how to live one’s life.”

25 Percentage of alcohol that remains in wine used in cooking after food has been simmered or baked for one hour. Considering the alcohol level of wine is low to begin with (generally 12 to 15 percent), that’s a very low proportion. Generally speaking, the alcohol level decreases the longer a dish is cooked.



In any ranking of the great American Presidents, you’ll always find George Washington’s name among the top five. And little wonder. Consider how Washington led his life: “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.”

FOOD & WINE PAIRINGS

J'S NEW BUBBLE ROOM MENU

J Vineyards & Winery is showcasing how the excellence of its wine portfolio complements world-class cuisine with a new food and wine tasting program in its Visitor Center "Bubble Room."

The luxurious private tasting salon at the Healdsburg, Calif., winery features a three-course menu developed by Executive Chef Mark E. Caldwell.

"When (founder) Judy Jordan opened J's Visitor Center in 1999, we were one of the first wineries in Sonoma County to offer food and wine pairings," Caldwell notes. "Our hope is that the new Bubble Room menu will allow guests to come away with a more complete awareness of how food and wine pairings work, as well as the qualities that make the Russian River Valley such a rare and special place to make wine."

The first course of the

new tasting menu consists of Curried Dungeness Crab Cake with Fennel, Navel Orange, Mache and Ginger Aioli, served with Chardonnay; and

Puy Lentil Capuccino, served with Pinot Gris.

The second course pairs Painted Hills Beef Short Rib "Shepherd's Pie" and Blue Lake Beans with a vineyard-designated Pinot Noir; and CK Lamb Loin and Truffle Tapenade with an appellation designated Pinot Noir.

And the third course consists of Wild Mushroom Pate and Micro Bulls Blood Beets with Rosé sparkling wine; and Artisan Cheese and Honeycomb with Vintage Brut.

To learn more about J's Bubble Room and its offerings, call the winery at 800-JWINECO.



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PAN SEARED SCALLOPS WITH GINGER SAUCE

Try this palate-awakening dish with Gewurztraminer, Riesling or a non-oaked Chardonnay. This recipe makes 4 servings.

Ingredients

- 1 carrot, peeled and quartered
- 1 shallot, quartered
- 2-inch piece ginger root, thinly sliced
- 1 clove garlic, halved
- 1 cup fat-free, reduced-sodium chicken broth
- 1/4 cup dry white wine
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 1-lb. sea scallops
- 1/8 teaspoon salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- Chopped chives

Preparation

1. Combine carrot, shallot, ginger, garlic, broth and wine in a medium saucepan. Cook, uncovered, over medium heat until liquid is reduced to about 1/2 cup, about 12 minutes. Strain, then discard vegetables and reserve liquid.
2. Pat scallops dry with paper towel. Heat oil in non-stick skillet that has been sprayed with non-stick cooking spray over medium-high heat. Place scallops in single layer in skillet. Cook until golden brown on bottom, about 4 minutes. Turn scallops. Sprinkle with salt and pepper to taste. Cook 2 minutes or until second side is lightly golden. Reduce heat to low.
3. Pour reserved liquid over scallops. Simmer 1 minute, or until scallops are done, stirring up any browned particles into sauce and spooning sauce over scallops. Arrange scallops in deep platter; spoon sauce over. Sprinkle with chives.

GABLES BLUE CHEESE POTATOES

When you're serving a thick, juicy steak and drinking a big, bold red wine, this dish makes a wonderful companion. It was made famous by The Gables restaurant in Corvallis, Ore., and this recipe makes 8 servings.

Ingredients

- 2 1/2-lbs. Yukon gold potatoes, peeled and quartered
- 6-oz. blue cheese
- 1/2 to 1 cup sour cream
- 1/2 cup butter, softened (1 stick)
- 1/2 bunch green onions, chopped (about 3/4 cup)
- 1 tablespoon minced garlic
- 1 1/2 teaspoons salt
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper

Preparation

1. Place quartered potatoes in a large saucepan and barely cover with water. Bring to a boil and cook until tender, about 15-20 minutes. Drain well.
2. Place cooked potatoes in a large bowl and mash with a potato masher or fork. Add blue cheese, 1/2 cup sour cream, butter, green onions, garlic, salt and pepper.
3. Whip with an electric mixer until smooth, adding the remaining sour cream as necessary. Keep warm until served.

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