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The Grapevine

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER FOR VINESSE WINE CLUB MEMBERS

How Many Grapes in a Bottle of Wine?

- 5 Perfect Days in Rioja
- Andretti Winery
- Fromage Planning Guide
- Pairing Wine and Steak
- Santa Ynez Valley
- Big City Wine Cellars

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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.

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EDITOR'S JOURNAL

California Wine: Let's Crush the Numbers

By Robert Johnson

Yes, we meant to type "Crush" up there in the headline. Yes, we know the commonly used phrase is "crunch the numbers." But this is a column about wine, okay? And in the world of wine and grapes... we crush.

(Sorry. Didn't mean to get carried away there...)

Courtesy of Wine Institute and the California Association of Winegrape Growers, a whole bunch of wine-related numbers recently crossed my desk... and some of them were pretty interesting. So, I thought I'd share of few of them with you...

■ **2,843.** If you read last month's column, you know that's the number of wineries in California (at the time Wine Institute issued its press release).

■ **4,600.** That's how many winegrape growers there are in California. Even with a good deal of crossover with the wineries, that still means there are a good many folks who concentrate on nothing but growing grapes.

■ **110.** That's the number, at a minimum, of winegrape varieties grown in California today. If you can name more than a couple dozen, you're doing very well. Many are quite obscure, limited to smaller-than-an-acre plantings.

■ **48.** Of the 58 counties in California, that's the number in which winegrapes are grown.

■ **20.7 million.** That's how many people visit California's wine regions each year. Frankly, based on the previous stat, they'd have to go some to *not* visit a wine region.

■ **820,000.** The number of jobs in the United States that are created by California wine.

■ **330,000.** The number of those jobs in California.

And finally, my favorite statistic of all...

■ **Between 600 and 800.** The number of grapes, depending primarily on their size but also their level of ripeness, that it takes to make one standard (750-ml.) bottle of wine.

Something to think about while munching on that Thompson Seedless bunch at lunch...





Wining and Dining in the Big City

“Wine Country” — be it in California, Oregon, Washington or locales around the world — typically is home to a number of wonderful restaurants.

But there still are plenty of fabulous wine-focused restaurants in America’s and the world’s big cities.

With that in mind, we begin a series of occasional “Cellarmaster” excursions to destination restaurants where wine shares the spotlight with the food. We’ll begin with America’s three largest cities...

■ **New York** — Adour Alain Ducasse, inside The St. Regis Hotel, has an elegant yet unobtrusive atmosphere and a menu that features expertly prepared dishes that will dazzle, rather than overwhelm, the palate. Among our favorites: hamachi, thickly sliced, embellished by bits of avocado, apple, crouton slivers and green apple mustard. The wine list comes in two versions: one with about 600 selections, and the other with around 1,800. And if you’re lucky enough to snag one of four available seats at the bar, you can use touch-screen technology to learn everything you could possibly want to know about the wines.

2 E. 55th St., New York, NY; 212-710-2277

■ **Chicago** — Vivere is the star of the three restaurants housed in the downtown Italian Village. That’s because the



food is so impressive; the wine list is shared by the other two establishments. For a meal you’ll not forget, try the *agnolottini di fagiano* (pasta rectangles stuffed with pheasant). As for the

wine, with 600 Italian selections and 200 from the rest of the world, you’re bound to find something you’ll love.

71 W. Monroe, Chicago, IL; 312-332-4040

■ **Los Angeles** — Montage Beverly Hills is home to the popular Parq restaurant, but we prefer Muse, which is located on the mezzanine level. The food is elegant as opposed to fancy. The turbot, for instance, is served with nothing more than charred romaine and apples — and it’s exquisite. The wine list includes 500 selections and is focused on boutique producers, providing an opportunity to try a bottle you’ve never had.

225 N. Canon Dr., Beverly Hills, CA; 310-860-7800



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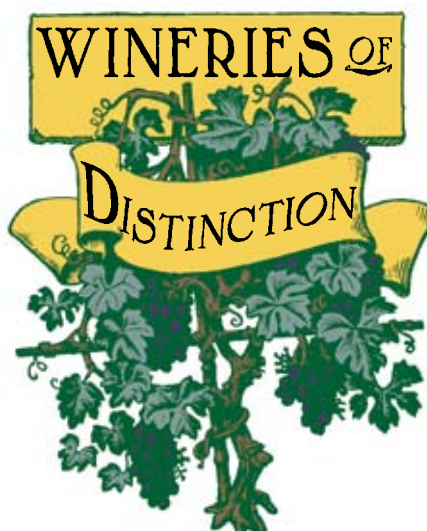
FREQUENCY:

Approximately Monthly

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If you are of a "certain age," you undoubtedly recall watching Mario Andretti driving fast cars, often on ABC-TV's "Wide World of Sports."

These days, Andretti is living life in the slow lane — or, at least, a *slower* lane — as the owner of Andretti Winery in the world-famous Napa Valley. And although Highway 29 is a far cry from "The Brickyard," he has settled into his second profession quite nicely.

Andretti says he doesn't actually remember the moment he fell in love with wine; it just happened over a period of time. It no doubt began while growing up in Italy, where wine is a part of everyday life.

But when he was 15 years old, his family immigrated to the United States.

There was a dirt track near his home in Nazareth, Pa., and his interests almost immediately turned exclusively to racing.

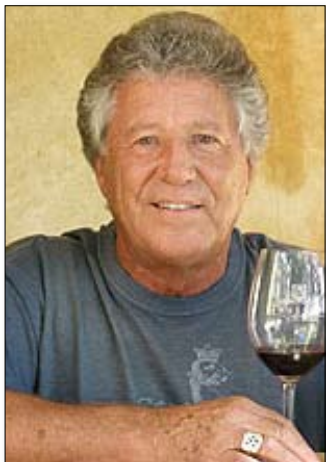
He ended up racing for parts of five decades, winning just about everything — the Indy 500, the Daytona 500, the Formula One World Championship and the Pike's Peak Hillclimb. He won the Champ Car National Championship four times and was a three-time winner at Sebring. He was the National Dirt Track Champion. He won races in sports cars, sprint cars and stock cars... on ovals, road courses, drag strips... on dirt and on pavement.



Andretti Still Knows How to Win... Now, With Wine

In his quest for these various championships, he traveled the world. His travels to exotic places — combining great dining with fine wine — led to his ultimate appreciation of wine as one of life's pleasures.

The Andretti Winery's 42-acre vineyard is situated in the heart of Napa's Oak Knoll District, toward the southern end of the valley. This



Mario Andretti

exceptional location — benefiting from the climate-moderating breezes and fog from San Pablo Bay — makes for superior slow ripening of the grapes, often extending a growing season to nearly eight months.

The area is ideally suited for growing world-class Chardonnay and Merlot, for which Andretti dedicates much of his Oak Knoll District estate.

Andretti understands the importance of a good winemaker, too, and Bob Pepi has been with the winery since its founding, and was involved in the decision to purchase the property and its vineyard.

Bob has been growing grapes and making wine for a long time. He and his father started the Robert Pepi Family Winery in Oakville as a natural extension of owning vineyards in the Napa Valley for 15 years. There, he pioneered the Sangiovese grape in California and making fine wine from that variety.

Bob's philosophy is that great wines are made in the vineyards. As winemaker, he gently guides their development through the fermentation and aging processes until the wines are ready for release.

Andretti Winery offers three series of wines, each occupying a unique niche in the marketplace.

The Montona Reserve Series is named in honor of Andretti's childhood home of Montona, Italy. These are ultra-premium wines crafted exclusively from estate-grown grapes and other stellar Napa Valley

vineyards.

In each vintage, Pepi takes the finest hand-selected fruit to create the Montona wines: an Estate Reserve Chardonnay, an Estate Reserve Merlot and a Napa Valley Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon.

The Napa Valley Series is crafted principally from prized Napa Valley fruit. The series includes an array of popular,

food-friendly varietals that please even the most discriminating palate: Pinot Grigio, Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay, Sangiovese, Pinot Noir, Syrah, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon and a unique Zinfandel-Primitivo blend.

The California Selections Series was inspired by its Italian heritage and "La Dolce Vita" principle. These wines are made with the belief that good wine should be enjoyed daily with meals, as part of a fine lifestyle. Sonoma and other North Coast fruit is used to create enticing renditions of Fume Blanc, Chardonnay, Merlot, Zinfandel and Cabernet Sauvignon.

With virtually every one of its bottlings — from the Montona Reserve Series to the California Selections Series — the Andretti Winery takes the checkered flag.

Winery 4-1-1

Andretti Winery

4162 Big Ranch Road
Napa, CA 94558
707-261-1717

Winemaker:

Bob Pepi

Tasting Room Hours:

Daily, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.

Tour Inquiries:

info@andrettiwinery.com

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5 Perfect Days in Rioja: Land of a Thousand Wines



TOURING TIPS

“Few countries hold on to and nurture their traditions so tenderly or so enthusiastically as Spain. Tradition and modernity somehow manage to fit snugly together.”

So wrote Giles Tremett in *Ghosts of Spain: Travels Through Spain and its Silent Past* (Walker & Co., 2006).

Today’s Rioja region of Spain is a study in contrasts, a winemaking area firmly rooted in its storied past, even as it leaps confidently toward the future. Part of what makes Rioja so compelling for wine lovers is the fact that these contrasts coexist without contradiction.

Denominación de Origen Calificada Rioja, as the wine region is officially known, is a uniquely Spanish phenomenon: both a living summation of a rich cultural heritage and a land in a constant state of evolution. Protected by mountains on its northern and southern flanks, Rioja’s

upper Ebro basin extends eastward toward the Mediterranean Sea like a giant inverted “V.” A contiguous and self-contained wine kingdom unto itself, Rioja’s geological, topographical and climatic traits are ideally suited to quality viticulture.

Despite age-old internal political divisions, the valley is unified by an ancestral dedication to the vine, a dominant black grape variety (Tempranillo), and a local gastronomy whose flavors are the muse of the wines of the region.

Officially divided into three sub-zones — Rioja Alta, Rioja Baja and Rioja Alavesa — this 150,000-acre realm includes hundreds of unofficial subdivisions that create a colorful array of distinct viticultural

principalities governed by *terruño*, or terroir. The vast majority of the region’s bodegas practice traditional grape-sourcing, typically purchasing grapes from growers from all over the region and blending them to create a house style. The result is an abundance of uncharted micro-vineyard distinctions and a seemingly limitless variety of styles and flavors.

The winemaker’s touch adds the final component to this portrait of diversity and harmony of contrasts. Vineyard management, grape provenance, yeast variety, choice of oak (American, French, Central European, Russian), time in barrel, final blend, etc. all play critical roles in the ultimate style of the wine.

Where once traditional Rioja lovers feared the end of the historically classic style (long aging in American oak, sublime secondary and tertiary aromas, adherence to traditional age designations), Rioja’s historic styles now are more popular than ever,



tempering the rush toward extraction for extraction's sake. This pendulum-like evolution in the region continues to add nuance to the picture.

Instead of, "Is it modern or traditional?" the question, increasingly, has become: "Is it a good wine or an exceptional wine?" Heightened awareness and comparative tastings have shed renewed light on the careful winemaking and commitment to site-specific expression that underlie the region's new generation of wines.

With centuries of wine culture in its veins, a rich palette of *terruños* in its arsenal, and such extraordinary diversity of styles available on the market, Spain's premier winemaking region offers limitless opportunities to discover the new face of Rioja.

The Hotel Victoria makes a great home base for a Rioja wine expedition, and its on-site restaurant provides all of the wonderful food flavors of the region: "Special Reserve" Iberian ham... quail salad in a quail vinaigrette... anglerfish with Carril clams in a seafood sauce... vegetable skewers...sponge cake with ice cream, fruit and a meringue mountain flame...

There are myriad other hotels and B&B-style inns that also offer fine accommodations for five perfect days in Rioja:

- **Day 1** — Arrive in Bilbao via Madrid, Barcelona or Paris. Visit the Frank Gehry-designed Guggenheim

Museum, followed by tapas in old Bilbao.

Spend a night in one of Bilbao's charming inns or modern hotels near the Guggenheim.

- **Days 2-3** — Drive to Rioja. Stay in the walled city of LaGuardia or the parador in the wine city of Haro. Spend a day visiting wineries and new architectural wine palaces, followed by a tapas crawl on Logroño's famous Calle Laurel.

Don't miss dining at the Michelin-starred El Portal de Echaurren in the resort town of Ezcaray, or one of the region's many steak houses known as *asadors*, where grilling meats is an art. Spend a half-day at Rioja's spectacular Museum of Wine Culture near Briones.

- **Days 4-5** — Drive to Europe's food capital, San Sebastian, where great eating and drinking are a lifestyle. This beachside resort's restaurants have more Michelin stars per capita than any city in the world.

Work up your appetite with a walk on one of Europe's most beautiful beaches or climb nearby hills. Then set yourself loose on the miles of tapas bars that line the streets. Plan your meals carefully because you'll want to try one of the region's famous restaurants, traditional eateries or seaside fish restaurants. All of them have an amazing array of wines from their favorite region: the magnificently diverse Rioja.

For Further Information

Hotel Victoria

Paseo de la Constitucion, 97
26580 Arnedo (La Rioja)
+ 941-38-01-00

Guggenheim Museum

www.guggenheim-bilbao.es

El Portal de Echaurren

www.echaurren.com

General Tourism

www.vibrantrioja.com

VINESSE

Hot LIST

1 Hot Self-Guided Tour. You say you've been to the Napa Valley? Explored Santa Barbara County's wine country? Mined for new discoveries in California Gold Country? Then consider a trip to Southern Oregon's Rogue Valley and Applegate Valley, where you'll find handcrafted specialty foods, award-winning cheeses and world-renowned produce in addition to world-class wines. The Oregon Wine & Farm Tour group offers a list of places to visit, a map, recommended restaurants in the area and more — everything you need to plan a trip.

oregonwineandfarmtour.com

2 Hot Down Under Wine Getaway. For a limited time, the Radisson Plaza Hotel and Bilson's Restaurant are teaming up to offer a package that includes a studio spa suite, a chilled bottle of Moët & Chandon Champagne and chocolate-dipped strawberries upon arrival, a three-course dinner for two with a complimentary glass of Champagne, a deluxe hot breakfast served in your room, plus access to the hotel's health club. Offers change occasionally, so check the Web site for the latest information.

bilsons.com.au

3 Hot Wine Blog. There are thousands of wine-related blogs out there. One we like a lot is written by Mary Baker of Dover Canyon Winery in Paso Robles, Calif. It's down to earth, educational and often quite funny.

dovercanyon.typepad.com



Weissherbst. A German rosé-style wine made from a single red grape variety.

X. California winery that makes wine from grapes grown in Napa Valley and Lake County.

Yount, George Calvert. Man who planted the first winegrapes in the Napa Valley (in 1839). The town of Yountville is named for him.

Zin Alley. Winery located in the Templeton Gap area of California's Central Coast. Makes Zinfandel and Zinfandel Port.

Appellation. A geographically delineated wine region.

Bridge. Food added to a dish to help that dish match a certain type of wine. Example: adding cherry sauce to duck so it pairs better with Merlot. (Hint: Identify the dominant flavor of a wine, then find a way to add that flavor to the dish.)

VINESSE STYLE

A FRENCH CHEESE PLATE

The language of cheese has a decidedly French accent: Brie... Camembert... Roquefort... Chèvre...

In fact, the French have created more kinds of cheese, or *fromage*, than any other country. There are hundreds of cheeses to choose from, enabling you to experience an amazing variety of flavors, styles and aromas — each a product of the land, the traditions and the *terroir* of its region.

French cheeses offer an array of tastes and textures. They are unrivaled in their ability to excite and tempt the palate. Enjoying French cheese with a glass of wine is the best way to experience the *joie de vivre* that is at the heart of the French lifestyle.

In planning a *fromage* plate, think quality as opposed to quantity, showcasing anywhere from three to five cheeses. Plan on four to six

ounces of cheese per person.

Choose a variety of cheese styles (from creamy soft to hard) and milk types (from goat to sheep to cow's milk-based cheeses). For peak freshness and flavor, shop for cheese within just a few days of your event. And don't be shy about asking the experts for help; your local *fromager* can suggest complementary



flavors and textures to create a harmonious cheese platter.

What about the wine? In general, pair a mild cheese with a lighter, milder wine, and a more robust, stronger cheese with a bolder wine.

You can find additional tips online at: cheesesoffrance.com.



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APPELLATION SHOWCASE

Santa Ynez Valley



Santa Barbara County has a history of winemaking and winegrape growing stretching back more than 200 years — before California was a state.

From the Mission Era of early California through the Rancho and Pueblo Era, struggling through Prohibition and on to the beginning of the modern era of viniculture that started in the 1960s, the county continues to combine traditional, hand-made techniques with the latest cutting-edge innovations in grape-growing and winemaking.

There are several distinctive growing areas within the county, and one of the best is the Santa Ynez Valley — a long, east-west corridor with very cool temperatures on the coast that become progressively

warmer inland.

With so many microclimates, several varieties do well in Santa Ynez, from Pinot Noir in the west to Cabernet and Merlot in the east. Several Rhone and Italian grape varieties also have gained acclaim in this versatile American Viticultural Area.

Santa Ynez Valley has the county's largest concentration of wineries. From one-person labors of love to multi-thousand case operations, each has a dedication to producing wine that truly reflects the high quality and broad diversity of local grapes.

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“Wines are like hemlines. They go in and out of fashion.”

— Bob Bansberg, wine director at Gabriel's in Chicago

Q What is the best kind of cheese to serve with red wine?

A That's a very broad question, but that said, red wine in general can be challenging to pair with cheese. But if there were



one “go-to” combination, it would be a full-bodied red wine, such as Cabernet Sauvignon, with a very ripe Camembert. And we'd suggest spreading the cheese on toasted brioche.

one “go-to” combination, it would be a full-bodied red wine, such as Cabernet Sauvignon, with a very

England's *Classic FM* magazine includes a regular feature that recommends wines to enjoy with specific recordings of classical music. One recent recommendation was Cerasuolo Montepulciano with pianist Yundi Li's new Chopin album. “Any of the pieces here will do,” the magazine noted, “but by the time you reach Chopin's *Fantasia Impromptu*, with its lyricism and brilliance, its delicate and its bravura passages, the wine will have opened out fully, revealing all its nuances of cherry and spice.”



If there are two states that know about trails, they would be Nebraska and Wyoming. Trails, yes... but *wine* trails? Yes! Four wineries in western Nebraska and eastern Wyoming have joined forces to form a weekend wine getaway for visitors to their shared border area. Presently there are three wine estates on the trail — 17 Ranch, Prairie Vine and Table Mountain — along with an educational vineyard that also includes a petting zoo, and a tasting room and gift shop that carries all of the area's wines.



Looking to lose a few pounds? There's no need to cut back on wine. A 4-oz. glass of wine has between 80 and 100 calories — fewer than a container of yogurt. Furthermore, wine is fat-free and contains no cholesterol.

2.48

Number of gallons of wine per resident consumed by Americans in 2008. This compares to 1.95 gallons consumed in 1998, and 1.07 gallons in 1968. (Source: Wine Institute.)



Tinhorn Creek Vineyards has become Canada's first carbon-neutral winery, following a trail blazed by New Zealand's Grove Mill Winery in September 2006 and, more recently, California's Parducci Winery. Being carbon neutral typically requires organizations to reduce emissions of the gases associated with global warming and offset remaining emissions through carbon sequestration strategies (such as planting trees) or the purchase of so-called “carbon credits” from a recognized broker.



“To enjoy the total pleasure of wine, you have to be serious without taking things too seriously.”

— Paul Pontillier, winemaker for Chateau Margaux

FOOD & WINE PAIRINGS

STEAK

Some food-and-wine pairings are made in heaven. Some are made in a much hotter place.

On the heavenly side, a steak offers abundant wine-matching possibilities. Depending on the cut and the type of preparation, a good steak can bring out the personality in certain wines. Likewise, the right wine can elevate a steak dinner to one of those “I’ll never forget...” experiences.

Let’s explore some of the possibilities...

- With a rich, buttery steak — the kind you’d be served at a Ruth’s Chris Steak House, as an example — the beef would be enhanced by the fruit nuances of Pinot Noir or the herbal notes of Cabernet Sauvignon. Merlot also could work, since it mirrors the herbal quality of Cabernet, but it would need to be a big, bold rendition of the variety. A young Zinfandel also could work quite nicely, as the steak would help smooth out the rough edges that variety exhibits in its youth. For white wine fanciers, a rich, buttery Chardonnay also could work well, although a better match for such a voluptuous wine would be a rare leg of lamb. The rule of thumb when selecting a white wine to pair with steak: the bigger the better.

- We’ve often recommended pairing wines to cuisine — French wine with French food, German wine with German food, etc. The same theory can be applied to steak when its preparation evokes a specific heritage

or cooking style. For example, in Tuscany, the steak of choice would be the classic T-bone known as Fiorentina. And the best wine to serve would be a Chianti Classico.

- When a steak is prepared with pepper or some other type of hot spice, it can blow away the flavors of most wines — except those that have their own peppery component. Zinfandel is a dependable choice, but don’t shy away from a nice Syrah or Mourvedre, or a Rhone-style blend that includes those varieties.

- If you enjoy steak tartare, try it with a sparkling rosé or a fruit-forward Beaujolais. You’ll be in for an ultra-rare treat.



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CRAB SALAD

This recipe pairs perfectly with Sauvignon Blanc or Gewurztraminer. It makes 6 appetizer-sized portions.

Salad Ingredients

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 shallots, thinly sliced
- 1 teaspoon fresh ginger, peeled and minced
- 1/2 cup Granny Smith apple, chopped
- 1/2 cup zucchini, chopped
- 1/2 cup red bell pepper, seeded and chopped
- 1/2 cup green bell pepper, seeded and chopped
- 1/4 cup carrot, chopped
- 1/2 lb. crab meat, drained
- 1/4 cup mayonnaise
- 2 tablespoons fresh chives, chopped

Sauce Ingredients

- 2 tomatoes, peeled, seeded and chopped
- 1/3 cup fresh cilantro, chopped
- 2 tablespoons Sherry wine vinegar
- 1 clove garlic, chopped
- Pinch cayenne pepper
- 1/2 cup olive oil
- 2 heads Belgian endive, trimmed and separated into spears

Preparation

1. For salad, heat oil in heavy large skillet over medium-high heat. Add shallots and ginger, and sauté until tender, about 4 minutes. Add apple, zucchini, red and green peppers and carrot, and sauté until tender, about 5 minutes. Remove from heat, and cool to room temperature.
2. Mix crab meat, mayonnaise, chives and sautéed vegetables in large bowl to blend. Season to taste with salt and pepper.
3. For sauce, combine tomatoes, cilantro, vinegar, garlic and cayenne in blender, and puree until almost smooth. Gradually add oil and blend until sauce is

thick. Transfer to medium bowl. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

4. Arrange endive spears on large platter, tips toward platter edge. Spoon crab salad into center of platter. Drizzle sauce over endive. Garnish salad with chives and serve.

VEAL LASAGNE

This recipe, which makes 4 servings, matches beautifully with Zinfandel — red, that is.

Ingredients

- 1 lb. thinly sliced veal
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 3 large tomatoes, sliced
- 1 large clove garlic, minced
- 15 large basil leaves, roughly torn
- 2 tablespoons capers, drained
- 20 pitted Kalamata olives, halved
- 8 oz. fresh mozzarella, sliced for layering
- 4 oz. aged provolone, shredded (about 1 cup)

Preparation

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Lightly coat bottom and sides of 7-by-11-inch casserole with nonstick cooking spray.
2. Rub veal with salt and pepper to taste, then layer half of the meat in bottom of casserole. Add a layer of sliced tomatoes, then sprinkle with half the garlic, half the basil, half the capers and half the olives. Cover with a layer of half the mozzarella, filling in cracks with half the provolone. Repeat layers, using remaining ingredients.
3. Bake 15 to 20 minutes. Remove from oven and carefully pour off most of liquid formed from the tomatoes. Return to oven and bake another 15 to 20 minutes, or until mixture is bubbling and cheese is nicely browned. Pour off remaining liquid and let casserole rest for 5 minutes before cutting and serving.

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