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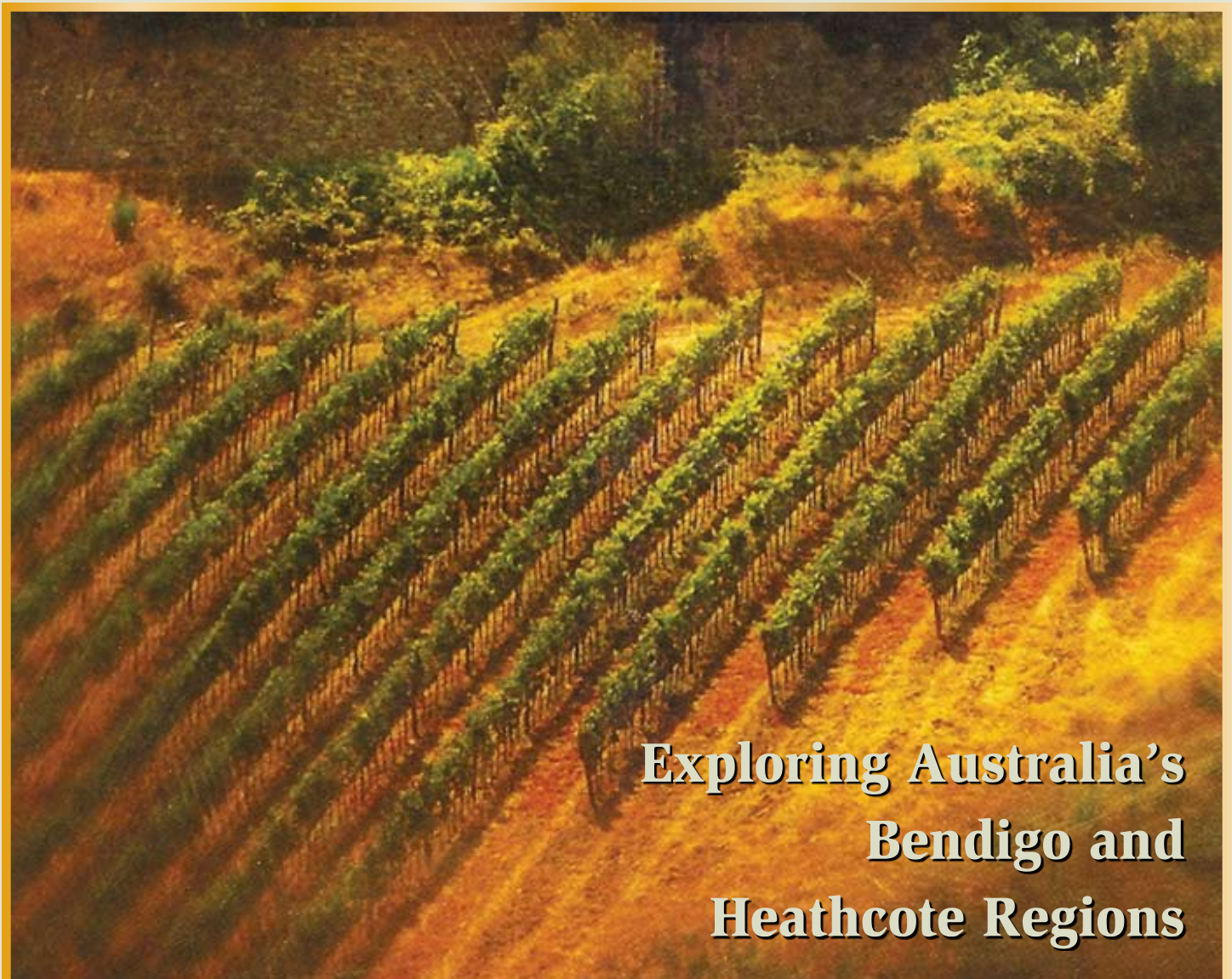
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The Grapevine

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER FOR VINESSE WINE CLUB MEMBERS

SPECIAL HARVEST 2009 EDITION

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Bendigo and
Heathcote Regions**

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EDITOR'S JOURNAL

Before Long, Expect Brazilian Wines to Garner Lots of Gold

By Robert Johnson

It shocked the world — or, at least, it shocked the good people of the United States — when the city of Chicago was eliminated in the very first round of voting to decide the host of the 2016 Summer Olympic Games.

Most observers believed that Chicago was one of two cities with the best shot at securing those Games. But the International Olympic Committee ultimately gave the nod to the other favorite, Rio de Janeiro — the first South American city ever so selected.

So, in a few years, be prepared for a barrage of publicity about all things Rio. The city best known for its annual Carnival soon will have a real coming-out party, and you can bet that wine will be flowing freely at that bash.

Wine? From Brazil? You bet.

A little known fact is that Brazil is the fifth-largest wine producer in the entire Southern Hemisphere, trailing only Argentina, Australia, South

Africa and Chile.

And now that its capital city has secured the 2016 Summer Games, Brazil may begin to climb that ladder, since the Olympics almost always attracts a great deal of investment, both domestic and foreign. It's foreign investment, largely from the United States, that has driven the growth of the wine industry in both Argentina and Chile.

But enough about business. Let's cut to the chase: Is Brazilian wine any good?

At present, a vast majority of Brazil's vineyards can be found in the extreme southern sector of the

country, southwest of Rio. Much of the production is earmarked for sparkling wines, although that is changing and table wines are becoming more prevalent. As a whole, the wines are good — not great, but good.

They're also getting better, and I'd expect that trend to accelerate now that Brazil

has a chance to shine on the world stage. By 2016, don't be surprised if Brazilian wines are bringing home lots of gold medals.





Introducing Your Friends to the Wonders of Wine

One of the great frustrations for a wine lover can be dining out with a friend who doesn't like wine.

You know how much wine can elevate a meal, and you want your friend to be able to share in that experience. But if you can even get them to stick their nose in a wine glass to breathe in those heady and intoxicating aromas, the response you're likely to get is, "Smells... winery."

Don't give up. There is hope even for the most resistant wine don't-wannabe. The key is finding a wine — just one — that they like. After that, the domino effect will kick in, and they'll be willing to try new things.

But how can we help them find that first wine to like?

By knowing the beverages they already like, and then identifying a complementary type of wine.

For instance, if your friend is a soda pop drinker, with a leaning toward drinks with lemon-lime flavor, pour them a glass

of Riesling — a wine with similarly tart flavors, but just enough sweetness to satisfy their sweet tooth. Almost any American-made rendition will do.

If your friend puts a lot of cream in their coffee, they may be ready for Chardonnay, which typically has a creamy quality to it. Assuming the wine was barrel-aged, it also may exhibit other nuances common to coffee, including caramel, vanilla and toast.

Black coffee drinkers, however, may be ready to go directly to red wines. A good first choice would be a varietal Malbec, which exhibits impressions of roasted coffee beans and mocha.

Tea drinkers are even more prepped for red wine, and you may want to steer them directly to Cabernet Sauvignon, which has a similarly astringent quality. If they put ice in their tea (i.e., less astringent), go with a lighter-bodied red.

Expose your friend to wines that are similar to their everyday beverages, and before long, you'll have a wine-savvy dinner companion.



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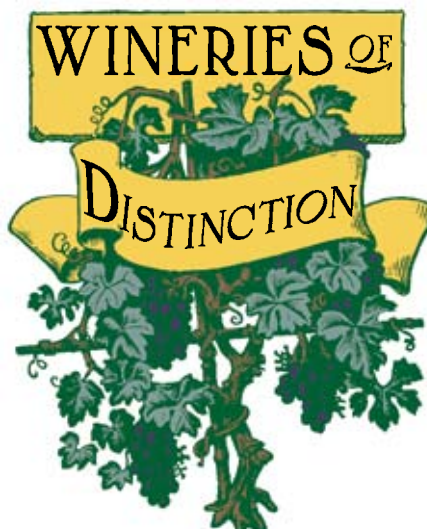
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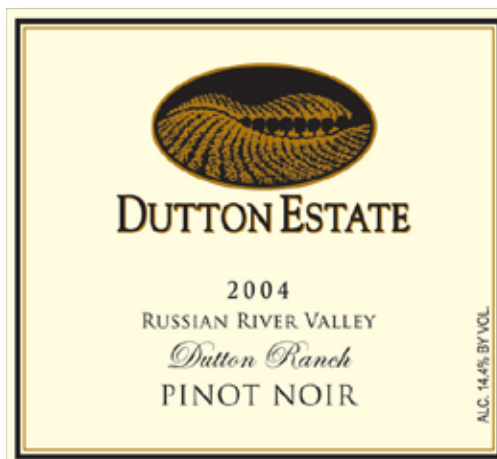
At the Dutton Estate, Grape Sources Are Never an Issue

In 1881, Warren Dutton purchased 200 acres of land in the Sonoma County community of Santa Rosa. Joined by his brother Reed, the Duttons planted their property to the best varieties of French prunes, a hot commodity at the time.

For many years the family business prospered on prunes, with forays into pears and hops. Warren Dutton Jr., great-grandson of Reed Dutton, grew up picking prunes and hops on the farm. In 1964, young Warren and his new wife Gail

bought their first 35 acres west of the town of Graton. Their original family home now serves as the current Dutton Ranch offices.

Unable to sell their fruit through normal distribution channels, Gail and young sons Joe and Steve peddled pears, prunes, apples, dried fruit and gift packs to passing motorists. At the same time, Warren had the foresight to plant winegrapes, just prior to the downturn in the apple industry.



“I thought he was out of his mind,” Gail remembers. Yet their first sale — \$88 a ton for French Colombard — was encouragement enough to put more sweat and capital into vineyards.

In 1985, the Duttons sold their Santa Rosa fruit stand and the surrounding property to developers. This ended one era for the family but opened a new one, as Gail and Warren put all their effort into expanding their West County holdings.

Sadly, Warren died of a heart attack while riding his horse in October 2001, leaving Gail, Steve and Joe to carry on. Later, in addition to their roles with Dutton Ranch, Steve and



Winemaker Mat Gustafson.

Joe developed their own businesses. They created Dutton Brothers Farming, which manages and farms 60 of the 1,100 acres in the Dutton holdings. Each brother also has his own winery. Joe and his wife Tracy started Dutton Estate in 1994. Steve and his wife Theresa founded Dutton-Goldfield Winery in 1998 with winemaker Dan Goldfield.

Gail remains active in the enterprise, managing the public relations and maintaining the Dutton family's role at the annual Gravenstein Apple Fair.

Today, the family sustainably farms 1,100 acres of vineyards, and places that special fruit in the capable hands of winemaker Mat Gustafson, whose passion for wine began while working at his uncle's store in his home state of Michigan.

By the age of 18, Mat had earned his hotel/restaurant degree and began managing restaurants. He then moved to Colorado and received a degree in Political Science from the University of Colorado-Boulder. He worked his way through college holding the position of sommelier at the Flagstaff House restaurant. There, he became hooked on Domain Leflaive White Burgundy, which one day would become his model for making Chardonnay.

When Mat graduated, he went to the Napa Valley and started working for Joseph Phelps Vineyards. He was a tour guide, worked in the cellar, and then became a sales rep. Later, he went back into the restaurant business

as wine buyer and sommelier at John Ash & Co in Santa Rosa.

While tasting a 1975 Russian River Valley Pinot Noir, Mat discovered great quality and age-ability, and his passion turned to Russian River Pinots. He then helped open the Oakville Grocery in Healdsburg, where he was the wine buyer and assistant manager.

Ultimately, however, Mat's desire was to make wine. He was hired at Oakville Ranch Winery and worked for two years in the cellar. He then began a vineyard development business in western Sonoma County, and started making wine on his own.

In 2001, Mat sold his share of the vineyard management company and went to work for Tracy and Joe. He started making wine under the guidance of Merry Edwards, then the consulting enologist for Sebastopol-Dutton Estate. In 2002, he was promoted to head winemaker.

Today, Mat's knowledge and understanding of the best vineyard sites at Dutton Ranch is unsurpassed. As he puts it, "Grape sources are never an issue," and that's why Dutton Ranch consistently produces world-class renditions of Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Pinot Noir, Syrah and Zinfandel.

Winery 4-1-1

Dutton Estate Winery

8757 Green Valley Road
Sebastopol, CA 95472
707-829-9463

Tasting Room Hours:

Daily, 11 a.m.-5 p.m.

Group Tour Inquiries:

info@sebastopolvineyards.com

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CENTRAL VICTORIA'S TWIN WINE CITIES



With apologies to Dallas and Fort Worth in Texas, and to Reno and Sparks in Nevada, America's most famous "twin cities" are Minneapolis and St. Paul in Minnesota.

Other countries also have their "twin cities," and in Australia, among the better known are Bendigo and Heathcote in Central Victoria. There, wine lovers can soak in the sights, smells and sounds of two engaging communities while exploring the world of Down Under wines.

Red wines reign supreme in Bendigo and Heathcote, as the mostly small, family-owned vineyards produce magnificent renditions of Shiraz (a.k.a. Syrah) and full-flavored Cabernet Sauvignon, among other enticing varieties. White wine enthusiasts also will savor the wonderful bottlings of Chardonnay and Riesling.

Bendigo rose from the gold fields of the 19th century and is home to grand Victorian buildings that have been magnificently restored. As with

other wine regions in Victoria, the early vineyards fell victim to both phylloxera and Australia's economic crash, and it was not until the late 1960s that a new vineyard was planted. Stuart Anderson was the visionary who took the planting plunge, and many followed his example.

The rich history of the city invites discovery, and contrasts beautifully with the small wine estates of the area, many of which were built from local stone.

The wine region of Heathcote, just south of Bendigo, is regarded as one of the finest sources — and some say *the* finest source — of Shiraz in all of Australia.

Such accolades have encouraged established vineyards to expand their



TOURING TIPS

plantings, and attracted new growers and vintners to the area. Grown in the deep Cambrian soil of Heathcote, Shiraz rises to an absolutely hedonistic level of quality.

Bendigo and Heathcote are diverse regions, but they are married by Shiraz, which is the specialty of the house at a vast majority of the wineries. Most of the vintners embrace

a style that is deep, dark and fruit-forward.

A great place to “set up camp” for an exploration of the region is the Emeu Inn, which triples as a bed-and-breakfast, a

fine restaurant and a wine center.

The wine center has been downsized a bit since the world economy took a hit, but it continues to specialize in Bendigo and Heathcote bottlings. And if a guest desires a specific local wine, the staff will do its best to track it down.

The inn offers six luxury suites and one deluxe self-contained cottage. Amenities vary from room to room, and include fireplaces, double spas and period furnishings. A continental breakfast is included with each stay, and you’ll find it difficult to get past the homemade breads, jams and preserves.

There are lots of dining choices around town for dinner, but you may just want to return to the Emeu, which offers one- two- and three-course meals. Among the tantalizing menu offerings are Thai-style green curry prawns, emu shepherd’s pie, venison mixed grill, slow-poached rabbit, and the house specialty — risotto with porcini mushrooms and black truffles.

If you’re more of a do-it-yourself diner, check out The Green Olive in Bendigo. In addition to serving the best coffee in town, this delicatessen offers an array of goodies that you can transform into a big meal or a satisfying picnic lunch.

But enough about food. What about the wines of Bendigo and Heathcote?

In the Bendigo area, your first stop should be Mandurang Valley Wines. Why? Well, if for no other reason than the estate was founded and continues to be owned by Wes and Pamela *Vine*. With a last name like that,



Emeu Inn Restaurant.

the wines have to be good, right? Right! But unlike their neighbors, the Vines don’t specialize in Shiraz; they concentrate on making a spicy and minerally

Chardonnay and velvety, earthy Pinot Noir.

Another must-stop in Bendigo is Chateau Leamon, where the Shiraz is a model for the region, and the Semillon is among the best made anywhere.

Among the wineries worth a visit in and around Heathcote are Coliban Valley (where all the wines are estate-grown), Eppalock Ridge (which makes a sublime Merlot-Cabernet Sauvignon blend), Lake Cooper Estate (try the Sparking Shiraz) and Peregrine Ridge (which crafts several distinct bottlings of Shiraz).

Take the time to explore both Bendigo and Heathcote, and they’ll become your favorite “twin cities.”

For Further Information

Emeu Inn B&B

Heathcote
emeuinn.com.au

The Green Olive

Bendigo
03-5442-2676

Mandurang Valley Wines

Mandurang
mandurangvalleywines.com.au

Chateau Leamon

Bendigo
chateualeamon.com.au

Heathcote Area Wineries

heathcotewinegrowers.com.au

VINESSE

Hot LIST

1 Hot Napa Boutique Hotel. The “art of living well” is what guests experience at the city of Napa’s newest hotel, AVIA. One of only three locations in operation (the others are in Savannah, Ga., and Long Beach, Calif.), AVIA Napa opened on July 1, and now serves as the perfect home base for a Napa Valley vacation. Within easy walking distance of the Napa Opera House and numerous restaurants. aviahotels.com

2 Hot Winery Tour. Napa’s Artesa Winery has raised the bar for memorable winery experiences. The estate offers several options for visitors, but for cheese lovers, nothing beats “Vino Con Queso.” Conducted daily beginning at 11:30 a.m., the tasting begins with a glass of sparkling wine, and features a variety of cheeses paired with Artesa’s Limited Release and Reserve wines. The cost: \$40. 707-254-2126

3 Hot Sonoma County Restaurant. Exotic foods and a captivating atmosphere greet diners at El Coqui, the only Puerto Rican restaurant in Sonoma County. In addition to the unique Latin American cuisine, the restaurant features a relatively small but well-selected wine list, spotlighting bottlings made at nearby estates as well as in Spain and Argentina. Located on Mendocino Avenue, which is one of the city of Santa Rosa’s main drags. 707-527-8871



Cafayate. A wine region in northern Argentina where the vineyards are planted at altitudes of nearly 6,500 feet. The leading grape variety is Torrontes.

Decanting. A process that separates any sediment in a wine bottle from the wine (particularly older reds), or helps a wine to “open up” (particularly younger wines).

Earthy. Describes a wine with aromas of mushrooms, minerals, forest floor, dried leaves and/or soil.

Finish. The lingering flavor of wine in one’s mouth after the wine has been swallowed. Generally speaking, a long finish is indicative of a quality wine.

Grenache. A star variety of France’s southern Rhone. In Spain, it’s known as Garnacha.

Harmonious. Describes a wine with its fruit impression, acidity, alcohol and tannin in balance.

VINESSE STYLE

GOURMET HAMBURGERS

Special sauce, lettuce, cheese, pickles, onions on a sesame-seed bun. You know these as six of the seven ingredients of McDonald’s Big Mac hamburger.

With all of those divergent flavors competing for tongue time, why even bother with the beef? When you think about it, pairing wine with a hamburger is much more about the condiments than the meat.

If you slather ketchup on your burger, you need a wine that’s very fruitful such as a California Zinfandel or an Australian Shiraz. If your burger is topped with a slice of very strong cheese, you may want to opt for a glass of Chardonnay — yes, a *white* wine.

Only if your burger is plain... or perhaps accompanied by grilled onions... should you opt for a big, tannic red such as Cabernet Sauvignon. Even in such cases, Merlot or Pinot Noir may be better choices.



With the foregoing as a word to the wise, here are three stylish burgers to check out when you find yourself in the right city...

• **Chicago — Rosebud Steakhouse.** Twelve ounces of juicy goodness on a pretzel-dough bun. Tastes like a

buttery steak, for about one-third of the cost.

• **Los Angeles — Father’s Office** (in Santa Monica). This restaurant has only one burger on its menu, and it’s topped with caramelized onions, blue cheese and arugula. The accompanying fries are made from sweet potatoes — a nice SoCal touch.

• **New York — City Burger.** The secret of this Times Square operation is the use of La Frieda Black Label beef — dry-aged and prime, and fabulously flavorful.



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APPELLATION SHOWCASE



El Dorado

Established in 1983, the American Viticultural Area in Northern California known as El Dorado includes those portions of El Dorado County located between 1,200 and 3,500 feet in elevation, bounded on the north by the middle fork of the American River and on the south by the south fork of the Cosumnes River.

El Dorado is a sub-appellation of the 2.6-million-acre Sierra Foothills AVA — one of the largest appellations in California — which includes portions of the counties of Yuba, Nevada, Placer, El Dorado, Amador, Calaveras, Tuolumne and Mariposa.

The El Dorado appellation is unique due to its high elevation and complex topography. El Dorado's mountain vineyards are perched at elevations high above the valley, where cooling breezes off the Sierra Nevada and the mountainous topography create a diversity of microclimates and growing conditions not found in other regions or in valley settings.

These microclimates provide ideal locations for growing a wide variety of grapes identified with the world's most acclaimed wine regions, including Bordeaux, the Rhone, Germany, Italy and Spain. El Dorado grows approximately 50 different varieties of grapes, ranging from Gewurztraminer, which does best in the higher and cooler portions of the county, to

Zinfandel and Barbera, which ripen perfectly in warmer climates.

El Dorado is cooled by elevation rather than by the fog that is common to the coastal regions. This means the grapes receive more direct sunlight, thus ripening fully without retaining excess herbaceous characters or acidity that is out of balance with the fruit flavors. El Dorado's relatively cool temperatures also allow the grapes a long "hang time" for uniform ripening.

In conjunction with the climate, there are three basic soil types determining the characteristics of the region: fine-grained volcanic rock, decomposed granite and fine-grained shale. Varying in elevation and topography, each soil offers good drainage and the nutrients needed to encourage vines that produce rich, deeply flavored grapes.

The unique combination of climate, soil and topography found in the El Dorado appellation produces wines of distinction, depth and density with a maturity unmatched in other regions.

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Q I always had thought that French Sauternes was the sweetest wine in the world, but when we were dining out the other night, the server told me that's not so. Is she right?

A Yes. The sweetest wine is Tokay Eszencia, which is made each year in Hungary — but only in minuscule quantities. Whereas Sauternes has anywhere

from 8 to 12 percent residual sugar, Tokay Escencia checks in with... are you sitting down?...



between 40 and 70 percent! Even so, it's an amazingly balanced wine, and worth trying at least once — if you can track down a bottle.



They are known as “wine killers” — foods that you should try to avoid when serving wine. Artichokes and asparagus are among the most challenging pairing partners, but if you absolutely must serve them, open a bottle of Sauvignon Blanc. Wine and cheese are often served together, but if your cheese plate includes more than two or three choices, the pairing becomes problematic. Among the more versatile wines when it comes to matching with cheese is Gewurztraminer.

Finally, egg dishes can be very challenging; they don't go with “oaked” wines at all. That's why so many brunches offer sparkling wine.

On Dec. 19, Sonoma Valley docent Bill Myers will lead up to 50 people on a fun, casual and up-close hike through the 1,850-acre volcanic and vertical Kunde Family Estate in Kenwood, Calif. This is a great opportunity to see sustainable winegrowing practices at work while taking in some of wine country's most spectacular scenery. Bill's tours wind through the estate's distinct eco-systems, each one uniquely contributing to the process of sustainable winegrowing. Hikers will taste wines along the way in the very vineyards where the grapes are grown. This moderately strenuous hike lasts approximately four hours. The cost is \$25 per person, reservations are needed, and hikers are asked to bring along a sack lunch, water and sunscreen. The tour will begin at 10 a.m. at the Kunde tasting room and also will conclude there, enabling invigorated hikers to sample Kunde's hand-crafted, estate-grown wines. For further information, contact Kunde Family Estate at 707-833-5501.



directly from the producers — no middlemen, no credit cards — just really delicious, fresh produce,” he notes. “Samples are usually free, including small cups of locally produced wines or ciders.”

“Provençal life is rooted in its countryside, small towns and lively markets,” says Rick Steves, who hosts travel programs on public television and radio. “To enjoy any small French town at its vibrant best, it's worth being there on market day.” Steves adds that most markets run from around 8 in the morning until 1 in the afternoon, and many even offer wine. “Perishable items are sold

2.5

Number of pounds of grapes it takes, on average, to yield one bottle of wine.



“Wine can be explained and not explained. For great wine, like great art, there's something higher... or perhaps below... the conscious mind that must remain a mystery.”

— English wine writer Michael Broadbent

FOOD & WINE PAIRINGS

THANKSGIVING DINNER

Perhaps the greatest culinary irony of all is that the one dinner each year that calls out the loudest for wine is the one that's nearly impossible to result in "perfect pairings."

We speak, of course, of the Thanksgiving Day feast. The meal that presents so many divergent flavors that no single wine possibly could complement all of them.

So on the day we're supposed to be the most thankful, the wine lover is left to curse the bounty of vinous choices.

But like many things in life, the Thanksgiving wine conundrum is both a curse and a blessing. Think of Turkey Day wine pairing this way: If there's no way to be exactly right, there's also no way to be exactly wrong. (Perhaps that's an oversimplification, but just go with the flow, okay?)

The typical Thanksgiving dinner table will feature an assortment of qualities among the dishes — some that are sweet (such as sweet potatoes with marshmallows and maple syrup)... some that are acidic (such as cranberry sauce)... and

some that are spicy (such as sausage dressing).

Sweet flavors call for fruit-forward wines, because the fruit flavors make even a dry wine seem somewhat sweet. Acidic dishes need similarly acidic wines — wines that are crisp and clean, and will stand up to tart fare. And spicy dishes call for lower-alcohol, lower-tannin wines that help minimize the "heat factor." (A high-alcohol wine, such as Cabernet Sauvignon, would add heat, which ultimately equates with less flavor.)

The one wine that embodies all of these qualities — fruit-forward, somewhat acidic, and not extremely high in alcohol — is Pinot Noir. If you're going to serve only one wine on Turkey Day, make it Pinot.

That said, a much more fun approach is to treat the wine as you do the food: Turn the whole meal into a "smorgasbord." In addition to having numerous dishes to enjoy, also uncork a number of wines, and let guests make their own choices.

If this is your strategy, then seek out these additional varieties: Gewurztraminer, Riesling, Grenache (or Grenache-based blends) and Zinfandel.

And save a few bites of Aunt Martha's cornbread for us...



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PUMPKIN CHEESECAKE TARTS

This recipe, which makes a great alternative to the typical Thanksgiving dessert, makes 12 tarts. Try it with a well-chilled Blanc de Blancs sparkling wine.

Ingredients

- 2/3 cup gingersnap cookies, crushed
- 2 tablespoons butter, melted
- 8-oz. package cream cheese, softened
- 1 cup Libby's 100% pure pumpkin
- 1/2 cup granulated sugar
- 1 teaspoon pumpkin pie spice
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 2 large eggs
- 2 tablespoons sour cream
- 2 tablespoons Nestle Toll House semi-sweet chocolate morsels

Preparation

1. Preheat oven to 325 degrees. Line 12-muffin pan with paper cups.
2. Combine cookie crumbs and butter in small bowl. Press scant tablespoon onto bottom of each paper cup. Bake 5 minutes.
3. Beat cream cheese, pumpkin, sugar, pumpkin pie spice and vanilla extract in small mixer bowl until blended. Add eggs and beat well. Pour into muffin cups, filling 3/4 full.
4. Bake 25 to 30 minutes. Cool in pan on wire rack. Remove tarts from pan and refrigerate. Garnish with sour cream.
5. Place morsels in small, heavy-duty plastic bag. Microwave on high for 20 seconds, then knead. Microwave at additional 10-second intervals, kneading until smooth.
6. Cut tiny corner from bag, and squeeze to drizzle chocolate over tarts.



ACORN SQUASH WITH APPLE-RAISIN STUFFING

Looking for a different side dish to serve this Thanksgiving? Try this easy-to-prepare recipe, which makes 4 servings.

Ingredients

- Boiling water
- 2 acorn squash
- 2 large cooking apples, peeled, cored and chopped
- 2 to 4 tablespoons raisins
- 3 to 4 tablespoons butter, melted
- 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
- 4 tablespoons brown sugar

Preparation

1. Heat oven to 375 degrees.
2. In a large baking dish, pour in about 1/4-inch of boiling water. Cut squash in half lengthwise, and with a spoon, remove all pulp and seeds. Place each half cut-side down in the dish. Bake for 30 minutes.
3. Combine remaining ingredients.
4. Remove squash from the oven; turn halves over. Stuff the center of each squash half with the apple mixture. Return to the oven for 30 to 35 minutes longer, or until apples and squash are tender.
5. Stir each center lightly before serving.

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