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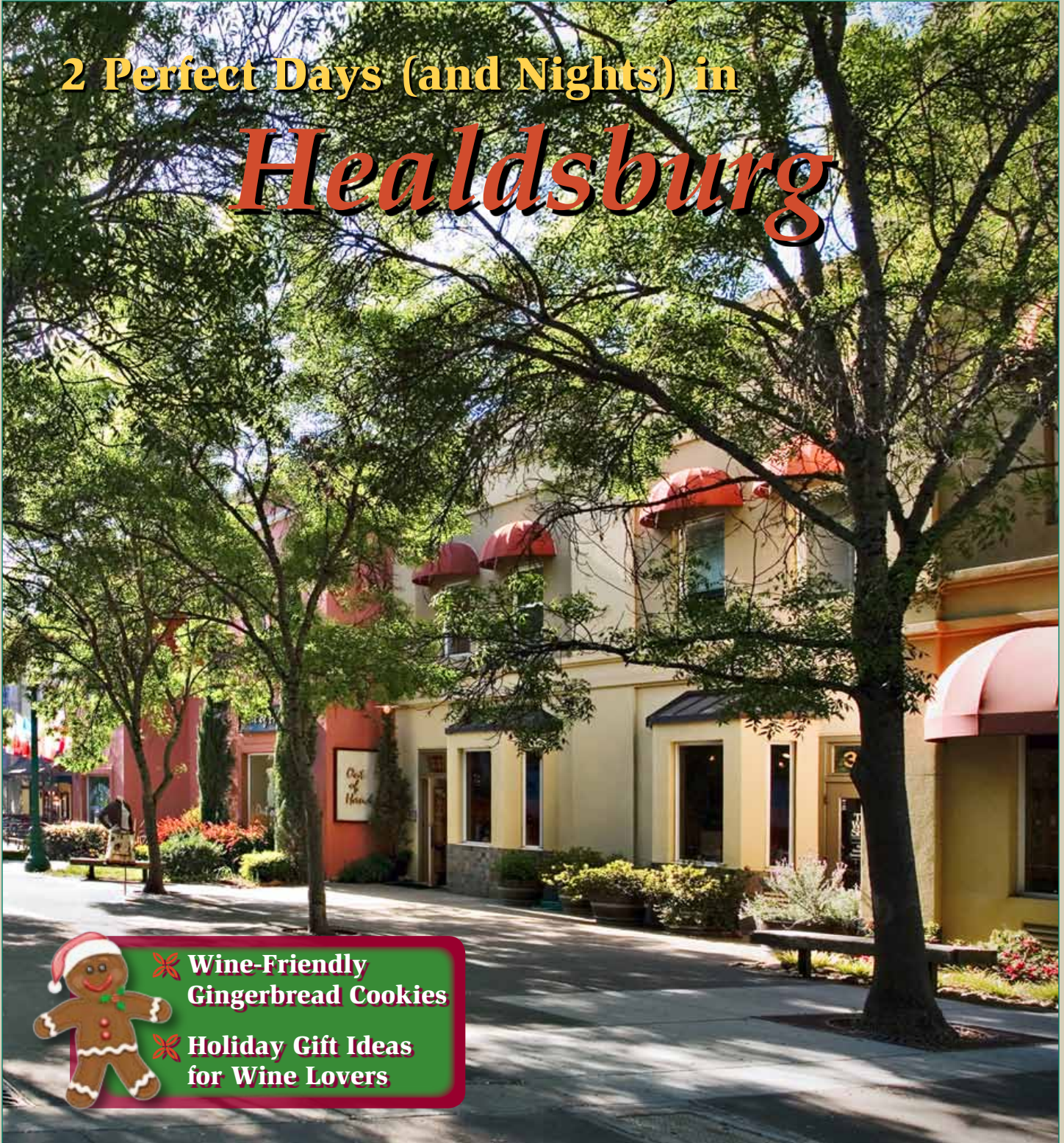
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EDITOR'S JOURNAL

**Chicago's Top Restaurants
Get the 'Star' Treatment**

By Robert Johnson

***They came. They ate.
They evaluated.
They awarded stars.***

Not many stars, considering there are thousands of restaurants in Chicago and its close-in suburbs, but at least the Windy City is now a *Michelin Guide*-starred metropolis.

According to reports, "inspectors" for the Guide ate anonymously around the city for two years to determine the crème de la crème of Chicago's dining scene. When the 2011 Guide was unveiled just before Thanksgiving, it listed 23 starred restaurants in all — 18 receiving one star, three receiving two stars, and two garnering the almost-unheard-of three stars.

Of the two getting three, one was expected and the other was not. Considering it has been universally fawned over by critic after critic, the three-star designation was widely anticipated for Alinea.

The happy surprise was the three-star rating for L2O — although that rating probably deserves an asterisk. More on that in a moment.

The two-star ratings were awarded to Avenues, Charlie Trotter's and Ria.

And the restaurants receiving one-star ratings were Blackbird, Boka, Bonsoiree, Crofton on Wells, Everest,

graham elliot, Longman & Eagle, NAHA, NoMI, Schwa, Seasons, Sepia, Sixteen, Spiaggia, Takashi, Topolobampo, Tru and Vie.

Missing from the list — and what should have been a two-star contender, in your humble editor's opinion — was Avec. The apparent

reason for the slight: A fire closed down the restaurant last summer, and Michelin "inspectors" didn't want to risk listing it in case it failed to reopen. Well, Avec *has* reopened, and hopefully will get the star treatment when the 2012 Guide is published.

Virtually all of the starred restaurants in Chicagoland have outstanding wine programs to complement their amazing menus, and thus offer memorable wining-and-dining experiences.

Now, about that asterisk for L2O. There is no doubt that it is a cutting-edge restaurant, worthy of two stars if not the three that were bestowed. But can it continue to live up to its reputation?

It's a legitimate question, and here's why: The day after the Michelin ratings were made public, L2O chef Laurent Gras — who had been taking some time off for personal reasons — quit.

Apparently, not even three Michelin stars can buy happiness.



‘It’s Right on the Tip of My Tongue’

Some critics are so over-the-top in the Sphrasedology they use to describe wine that their reviews serve to stymie, rather than stimulate, wine enjoyment.



That said, even some of the most common descriptors for wine — fruity, sweet and dry — can be misunderstood.

Let’s begin with “fruity.” Often, when someone hears that word, there is an assumption that the wine in question will be sweet. After all, isn’t virtually all fruit sweet?

In actuality, a wine is said to be fruity when its most prominent flavors are reminiscent of fruit flavors such as cherries, berries, peaches or apples. The wine itself can be completely dry (which we’ll define in a moment), yet still taste fruity.

Among white wines, the “fruity” description is commonly applied to Riesling, Gewurztraminer and Pinot Gris. Among reds, you’ll hear it uttered most commonly when Pinot Noir or Zinfandel is being consumed.

Now let’s deal with “dry.” A dry wine is one that has no sugar remaining following fermentation. But in common usage, the word is mistakenly used to describe a wine that may be somewhat

lacking in fruit flavors — often, a wine that has spent a good amount of time aging in oak barrels.

The best example is Cabernet Sauvignon, a variety that can take years for its mouth-puckering tannins to subside.

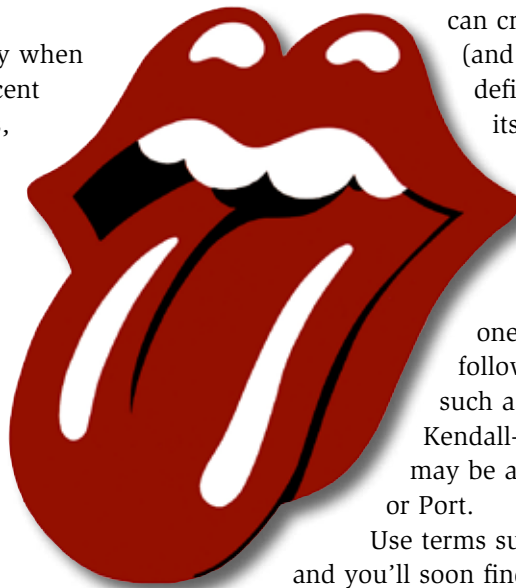
Those tannins, along with the oak influence, can create a sensation that many would (and do) describe as dry. But the actual definition of a dry wine deals strictly with its lack of residual sugar.

Finally, there’s “sweet.” Can a dry wine be perceived as sweet? Yes.

Can a fruity wine be perceived as sweet? Yes.

But the only truly sweet wine is one that possesses some residual sugar following fermentation. It may be a little, such as in California renditions of Riesling or Kendall-Jackson’s ubiquitous Chardonnay, or it may be a lot, such as in dessert-style wines or Port.

Use terms such as fruity, sweet and dry correctly, and you’ll soon find it easier to describe the types of wine that you really like.



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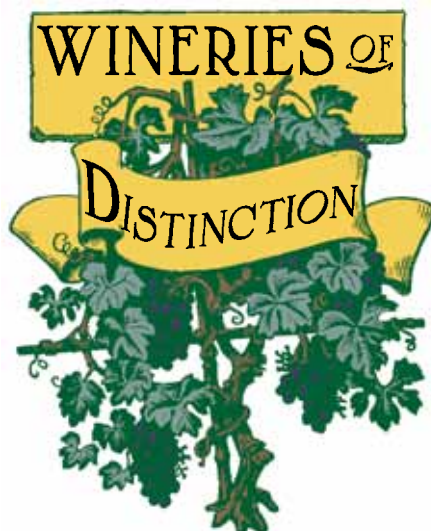
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Approximately Monthly

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New Generation Makes Its Mark at Domaine Faiveley

“The wines are supremely clean and elegant: definitive examples of Pinot Noir. Above all, they have richness and breed, the thumbprint of a master winemaker.”

So wrote Master of Wine Clive Coates in his book, *Cote d’Or: A Celebration of the Great Wines of Burgundy*. The estate about which he was writing: Domaine Faiveley.

Founded in 1825, Faiveley is situated in the heart of the Nuits-Saint-Georges, and has expanded strategically through seven generations of family members. The domaine now includes prestigious crus from Cote de Nuits and Cote de Beaune, as well as the most renowned

appellations of Cote Chalonnaise (such as Mercurey). Today, it encompasses 296 acres, 80 percent of which are family owned.

Gen-7 took over in December of 2004 when Francois Faiveley — after directing operations for 30 years — handed control to his son, Erwan.

Then 25 but mature for his age, Erwan knew what he knew, but more importantly, he knew what he didn’t know. So he hired Bernard Hervet,



a man with more than 20 years of experience in Burgundy, to help strengthen the technical teams, and refine the viticulture and winemaking methods.

This sent shockwaves throughout Burgundy, a winemaking region where change traditionally has come both slowly and reluctantly. But Erwan knew that in order for the family domaine to remain strong well into the 21st century, it had to evolve. That process is ongoing, and the results have been stunning.

Take the 2008 Corton Clos des Cortons bottling, as an example. An extremely focused wine with outstanding structure and beautifully defined fruit flavors, it is in such high demand that only 10 cases were exported to the United States. That's 120 bottles for the entire country. And even if one were to find a bottle, they'd have to ante \$167. That's the suggested retail price, but when allocations are so low, "suggested" becomes the key word.

What have Messrs. Faiveley and Hervet done thus far to improve quality?

In 2006, they invested in new wood tanks that allow fermentations to take place with minimal temperature fluctuation. That same year, they implemented changes in the barrel program, trimming their list of suppliers to just two, and ordering only light toasting to assure that the wonderful fruit flavors of their wines are never masked.

The next year, they created a new position — technical director — and hired Jerome Flous for it. Flous, who had consulted for some of Burgundy's leading domaines, is tasked with assuring total cooperation between the workers in the vineyards and the workers in the cellar. In the past, grapes were picked somewhat haphazardly; now, they are harvested only when they attain optimum ripeness.

Additionally, greater attention is paid to quality control in the cellar, making sure that the proper temperature

is maintained at all times and that pumping — moving wine from one barrel to another — is kept to a minimum. Simply put, the wine is now handled much more gently than it was in the past.

Once their own house was in order, the new management team began looking outward, seeking to expand the domaine's vineyard holdings. In 2008, they bought Domaine Monnot, which has Grand Cru vineyards throughout Burgundy. They also hired Julien Bordet to manage the vineyards.

Today, of the domaine's 296 acres, 74 are in Cote de Nuits, 24 in Cote de Beaune and 185 in Cote Chalonnaise. These include eight Grand Crus and 16 Premier Crus spread over 15 villages.

In the Cote Chalonnaise, Faiveley owns the largest domaine in Mercurey, and still has 49 acres of potential vineyards awaiting cultivation permits.

Erwan Faiveley balances his vibrant youth and focused business style with a mindful respect for his ancestors, their vineyards and family traditions. With an engrained knowledge of wine and the family business, he has given himself time to gain the necessary experience to develop his own style, and has begun making enhancements to ensure continuity for future generations.

"When one travels to Burgundy, one could have the impression that time stands still," he observes. "Nevertheless, a new generation is coming, with high-profile, well-educated and internationally savvy leaders. This generation will have to show consumers and critics that it is possible to keep a very careful eye on history and culture, while looking forward."

Winery 4-1-1

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The charm and genuine down-to-earth personality of Healdsburg is inescapable. From the sounds of jazz and laughter at town square events, to the enticing aromas of five-star cuisine, to the country roads winding through rolling hills of world-acclaimed wine growing appellations, Healdsburg acts like a magnet for wine-loving visitors to Sonoma County.

Take a stroll around town, and you'll discover the treasures and treats of small town individuality that make Healdsburg so special. World-class shopping. Renowned art and sculpture. Locally grown organic produce and artisanal breads, wines and cheeses. Independent bookstores. Treasure troves of antiquing.

Healdsburg is surrounded by several of Northern California's finest regional wine appellations, including Alexander Valley, Chalk Hill, Dry Creek Valley and Russian River Valley. Centrally located to more than 100 world-class wineries and tasting rooms, Healdsburg is the ideal place to discover all the best that Sonoma

County wine country has to offer.

It's also a great place to hunker down, park the car, and soak in the local flavor at a leisurely pace. We've built this two-day itinerary with that in mind.

FRIDAY

Arrive at the airport of your choice in the early or mid-afternoon. Most wine country visitors fly in to San Francisco International Airport, but we suggest opting for either the Oakland or Sacramento airports. You'll typically encounter much less traffic and get to Healdsburg faster.

Once you get close, follow the signs to the Healdsburg town plaza, and



TOURING TIPS

check in at the Hotel Healdsburg — classy, modern and comfortable, with a pool and spa. The nightly room rate includes a hearty breakfast each morning of your stay.

Take some time to unpack and unwind before heading to dinner at the Dry Creek Kitchen. No need to hop in the car; the restaurant is part of the hotel.

If the weather allows, ask for a seat on the arbor-shaded patio, and feast your eyes on the menu that stresses fresh, local ingredients. Start with

the salmon carpaccio, just to remind yourself that you are now officially on vacation.

The wine list is just as impressive as the menu, boasting 650 local bottlings. Since you don't have to drive home, you may as well splurge and order a full bottle to share.

SATURDAY

After eating breakfast at the hotel, stroll a block west of the plaza and take in the Healdsburg Farmers Market. And don't be surprised if you see some of the staffers from the Dry Creek Kitchen there; numerous local chefs base nightly specials on the fresh ingredients they can procure at the market.

After that, walk back to the plaza to explore the array of shops, almost all of which are locally owned and unique to Healdsburg. It's a great place to shop for gifts, including items you'll find only in wine country.

When it's time for a snack, head back to the Farmers Market and pick up a delectable tamale or taco from the Yucatan Tamale Truck. If your sweet tooth is calling, ask a local for directions to the Downtown Bakery & Creamery and order a doughnut muffin. *Everyone* who lives in Healdsburg knows where the Downtown Bakery is.

Don't eat too late in the afternoon, however, because tonight you'll be dining at Cyrus, where you're likely to be served as many as 17 "small plate" selections that are guaranteed

to satisfy the foodie in you. Cyrus is expensive, but worth it.

SUNDAY

Begin the final day of your stay with another filling breakfast at the hotel, then pack up, check out, load your car and head to the nearby Seghesio Family Vineyards.

The winery's "Family Tables" offers the opportunity to sit and relax — away from the busy tasting room bar — and enjoy wine as it was intended to be experienced: around a table with food and friends.

You'll meet chef Jon Helquist — whose 19 years of culinary experience began at Chez Panisse and included stints at Oliveto, the Martini House and Manzanita — as he prepares and serves recipes showcasing the bounty of Sonoma County.

Located where wine has fermented for more than a century before "gravity flowing" into the cellar below, the "Family Tables" rooms overlook the cellar and feature tables crafted by Ed and David Seghesio from the large redwood tanks once housed at the winery. Talk about an inventive recycling idea.

Weekend seatings begin at 10 a.m., with each day's final seating at 3:30 p.m. The cost is \$35 per person.

Sadly, it's now time to bid farewell to Healdsburg and return to the airport for your flight home. Don't be surprised if the primary topic of conversation in the car is how soon you could come back.

VINESSE

Hot LIST

1 Hot Las Vegas Steakhouse. Any restaurant that includes "wine" in its name is worth checking out, and that's certainly the case with Biscayne Steak/Sea/Wine at the Tropicana Hotel in Las Vegas. Airy and bright, this isn't your typical steakhouse. In addition to great cuts of beef, Biscayne offers a wide array of seafood, as well as unexpected dishes such as Cuban spring rolls and conch fritters. And for wine lovers, there's a four-course tasting menu, including wine, for a penny under 40 bucks. 702-739-2376

2 Hot Touring Adventure. A great way to see the Danube is by bike, riding alongside the Wachau region's vineyards that overlook the river. In fact, this itinerary has become one of the most popular among cyclists in all of Europe. And whenever you need a rest, simply stop in one of the local wineries for some liquid refreshment.

http://www.radurlaub.com/en/angebote/danube/100601133/cycle_hotel_in_the_wachau_region.html

3 Hot Los Angeles Wine Bar. In L.A.'s Los Feliz district, Covell Wine Bar has been attracting a see-and-be-seen crowd since it opened last summer, but don't let the "scene" fool you. Wines offered by the glass are relatively few in number but extremely well selected, and they're constantly switched out so there's always a reason to go back. www.barcovell.com

For Further Information

Cyrus

29 North St.
707-433-3311

Downtown Bakery & Creamery

308 Center St.
707-431-2719

Dry Creek Kitchen

317 Healdsburg Ave.
707-431-0330

Healdsburg Farmers Market

One block west of Plaza
707-431-1956

Scopa

109-A Plaza St.
707-433-5282

Seghesio's Family Table

<http://www.seghesio.com/>

Note: The Healdsburg Farmers Market and Seghesio's Family Table have seasonal hours, so be sure to inquire before planning your trip.



Beronia. A winery in Spain that's known for its sleek and elegant Rioja Reserva.

Cru. French for "growth," it's used with an adjective (such as Grand or Premier) to describe a specific vineyard's quality ranking.

Dolcetto. A red wine variety from the Piedmont region of Italy. The designation most commonly seen on labels is Dolcetto d'Alba.

Efeste. Proprietary name of a bottling of Riesling made by Evergreen Vineyard in Washington's Columbia Valley.

Finish. The final sensation one experiences when drinking wine. The best wines have long finishes in which the flavors linger on the palate.

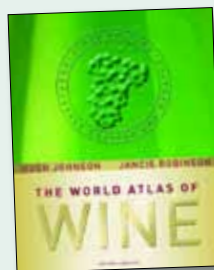
Graves. An area within France's Bordeaux appellation that produces crisp white wines in addition to the outstanding reds for which Bordeaux is best known.

VINESSE STYLE

HOLIDAY GIFTS FOR WINE LOVERS

Most wine lovers have two things in common: They love to drink wine (of course), and they also enjoy reading about it.

We've been touting Karen MacNeill's *The Wine Bible* ever since it was published several years ago, and it's still the go-to source for information on our favorite beverage, presented in an accessible, entertaining style.



But just in case you took our advice and have already bought and read that book, here's another: *Hugh Johnson's The World Atlas of Wine*. The latest edition boasts 48 extra pages, including 17 new color illustrations, 20 new maps, and — for the first time ever — double page spreads and full-page photos in the atlas section for maximum visual impact.

Coverage of the New World has been expanded with additions to the Australia and South America sections, and there even are some new Old World additions such as Toro in Spain, the Peleponnese in Greece, and Georgia.

The price of *The World Atlas of Wine* varies widely depending on where you buy it. It's available in most larger bookstores and, of course, online from Amazon.

If you prefer your wine reading in smaller doses, a magazine subscription would make an ideal gift. While *Wine Spectator* traditionally has enjoyed the largest circulation, we actually get more enjoyment out of reading *Wine Enthusiast*.

As its name implies, the writing is less stuffy and the information provided is every bit as valuable. Bonus: The subscription rate is lower than the *Spectator's*. For information, go to: www.winemag.com

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APPELLATION SHOWCASE



If you are a lover of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay, then at some point in your life, almost as if by osmosis, you will gravitate to the wines of Burgundy.

No country better defines its wine types by region than France. In Champagne, many of the world's finest sparkling wines are made. In Bordeaux, coveted bottlings of Cabernet Sauvignon-based blends are crafted. And in Burgundy, the white wine is Chardonnay, and the red wine is Pinot Noir.

Burgundian wines are “governed” by laws passed in 1905 and 1919, delineating rankings and defining appellation boundaries.

Some 600 vineyards qualify for “Premier Cru” status — not necessarily because they are among the best Burgundian wines being made today, but rather because of the standards that existed early in the 20th century. That’s not to say these wines are suspect in any way, only that there are plenty of Burgundian wines that lack the designation but are quite similar in quality.

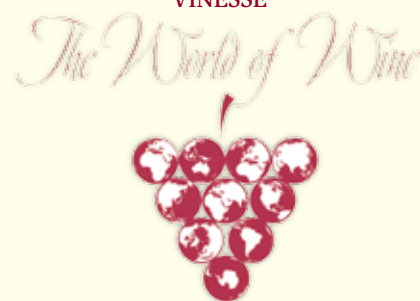
The most prestigious designation is “Grand Cru,” bestowed upon only

33 vineyards. The wines produced from those vineyards, few would argue, represent the best of the best in Burgundy — names such as Chambertin, Corton-Charlemagne, Montrachet and Clos Vougeot.

Among Burgundy’s appellations, Cote de Beaune (*pictured*) rewards the impatient. Its red wines are known for their enticing aroma and lighter body — and for maturing a bit more quickly than wines made in other areas. It’s said that drinking a red Burgundy before its time is a sin, but the red wines of Cote de Beaune actually reward early cork popping.

Among some of the other areas, the red wines of Nuits St. Georges are known for being robust and elegant, while the white wines of Pouilly Fuisse are soul mates to shellfish and oysters. And if you’re looking for a guarantee of quality on a label, seek out a bottle from Meursault, where a third of the production bears a “Premier Cru” designation.

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Q Please settle an argument: Does red wine or white wine have more alcohol?

A It depends on several factors. If you're looking for a broad generality, red would be the answer. But it really depends on the specific grape variety involved and the style preference of the winemaker. We've seen some California bottlings of Chardonnay that have alcohol levels that are higher than some red wines. A wine's alcohol level is determined, in part, by when the vintner decides to shut off the fermentation process. A higher alcohol level can sometimes equate with a richer, ore complex mouthfeel, but it may also lessen the wine's long-term aging potential. Another generality: the higher the alcohol, the less food-friendly a wine becomes, meaning it probably would be more enjoyable as a sipping wine.

William Sherer has been named Sommelier of the Year in Las Vegas. Sherer is the brains behind the magnificent wine program at Aureole, inside the Mandalay Bay resort. Aureole boasts a wine list that's 2,400 labels strong, and is known for its eye-catching wine tower.



“The French Laundry. Whatever they are serving that night is fine by me.”



— Race car driver Danica Patrick, asked to name her favorite restaurant. The French Laundry is an acclaimed Napa Valley dining destination. And her drink of choice? “Wine — a big Napa Valley red!”

Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger has honored the California Sustainable Winegrowing Alliance with the 2010 Governor's Environmental and Economic Leadership Award, the state's highest environmental honor, for the Alliance's California Sustainable Winegrowing Program. A 2004 GEELA recipient, CSWA received this year's award in the category of “Enhanced Environmental and Economic Leadership,” which honors prior award recipients who have sustained exceptional leadership and demonstrate significant and robust improvements in voluntary efforts to help conserve California's resources, protect and enhance the environment and strengthen the economy. CSWA was established by Wine Institute and the California Association of Winegrape Growers eight years ago to support widespread adoption of sustainable winegrowing practices. The program has broad industry participation with 1,566 vineyard and winery organizations, representing 68% of California's vineyard acreage and 63% of the state's 240 million case shipments. CSWA has held nearly 400 sustainable winegrowing workshops throughout California since the inception of the program, with more than 9,200 growers and winemakers attending.



23 Number of restaurants in the Chicagoland area to earn at least one star from the *Michelin Guide*. If you're planning a trip to the Windy City, the Guide (which retails for \$19) makes a great reference for foodies.

Last July, bottles of French Champagne were pulled out of a shipwreck discovered near Finland and Sweden. They are believed to be nearly 200 years old. Opened and tasted by experts, the wine — which had lost virtually all of its fizz — was said to smell and/or taste like lime blossoms, coffee and chanterelles. Each bottle could bring as much as \$70,000 at auction.



One of the world's leading Champagne experts, Richard Juhlin, samples one of the 168 bottles of Champagne salvaged from a 200-year-old shipwreck in the waters off the Aland Islands, between Sweden and Finland, at a tasting in Mariehamn, Finland.

FOOD & WINE PAIRINGS

ROSEMARY'S SHOWKET WINE DINNER

Although Kai and Dorothy Showket have stepped away from winemaking for a while, their wares were featured at a recent winemaker dinner hosted by Rosemary's Restaurant in Las Vegas.

Rosemary's addresses the question: Can a high-end restaurant that is not located in a Las Vegas Strip mega-resort survive and thrive, dependent largely upon nearby residents?

The answer to that question is a resounding yes. As one local magazine put it: "Rosemary's remains the gold standard for Las Vegas neighborhood restaurants."

Of course, the restaurant has two pretty good things going for it, namely Emeril Lagasse protégés Michael and Wendy Jordan. And naming the restaurant after Michael's mother had to score big on the culinary karma scale.

But people wouldn't keep going back — the key to success for any neighborhood eatery — if the food weren't good. And it's beyond good, as you can discover for yourself if you pick up the Jordans' cookbook, *Food of Love*.



Those who attended the Showket Wine Dinner at Rosemary's were treated to a dining-out grand slam home run: exceptional dishes paired with world-class Napa Valley wines. To get your creative food-and-wine pairing juices flowing, here's a look at the menu:

- Mushroom Duxelle Stuffed Profiterole with Fennel Aioli. *Served with a Champagne cocktail.*

- Rabbit Terrine with Vanilla Bean Tossed Arugula, Kiln Dried Cherry Relish, Toasted Brioche and Red Wine Syrup. *Served with Showket's 2007 Sangiovese.*

- Gorgonzola Risotto Stuffed Faro Quail on a Bed of Swiss Chard and La Quercia Prosciutto with a Rhubarb Sangiovese Berre Rouge and Fried Sage Leaves. *Served with Showket's 2007 "Asante Sana" Super Tuscan.*

- Trinity Smothered Bison Filet with Chef Wendy's "Get a Man Sweet Potatoes" and Creole Bordelaise Sauce.

Served with Showket's 2007 Bordeaux-style "Proprietary Blend."

- Dark Chocolate Tart with Cabernet Anglaise and Cassis Sorbet. *Served with Showket's 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon.*

Light & Sweet

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- FREQUENCY:**
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HOLIDAY GINGERBREAD COOKIES

This traditional holiday treat matches beautifully with wines made from the Muscat family of grapes, or with sparkling wines — either sweet or dry. This recipe yields about two dozen 5-inch-high cookies.

Ingredients

- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
- 3/4 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon ground ginger
- 1 3/4 teaspoons ground cinnamon
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cloves
- 6 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 3/4 cup dark brown sugar
- 1 large egg
- 1/2 cup molasses
- 2 teaspoons vanilla
- 1 teaspoon finely grated lemon zest

Preparation

1. In a small bowl, whisk together flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt, ginger, cinnamon and cloves until well blended.
2. In a large bowl, beat butter, brown sugar and egg on medium speed until well blended.
3. Add molasses, vanilla and lemon zest, and continue to mix until well blended.
4. Gradually stir in dry ingredients until blended and smooth.
5. Divide dough in half and wrap each half in plastic. Let stand at room temperature for at least 2 hours, or as long as 6 hours.
6. Preheat oven to 375 degrees.
7. Grease or line cookie sheets with parchment paper.
8. Place 1 portion of the dough on a lightly floured

surface. Sprinkle flour over dough and rolling pin. Roll dough to 1/4-inch thick. Use additional flour to avoid sticking.

9. Cut out cookies with a gingerbread man-shaped cutter. Space cookies on baking sheets 1 1/2 inches apart.
10. Bake 1 sheet at a time for 7 to 10 minutes. Do not over-bake.
11. Remove cookie sheet from oven, and allow the cookies to stand until they are firm enough to move to a wire rack. (Keep in mind that the cookies will continue to bake even after being removed from the oven, so it's better to take them out while they're still soft to the touch.)
12. After cookies have cooled, outline the edges with white icing, and also use the icing to make faces.

SWEET ONION DIP

Holiday time is party time, not to mention football-on-TV time. But that doesn't mean you have to stock up on beer. Instead, open a few bottles of Sauvignon Blanc, and enjoy that bowl of potato chips with this tasty, wine-friendly dip. This recipe yields about 5 1/2 cups.

Ingredients

- 1 cup mayonnaise
- 2 cups shredded Swiss cheese
- 1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 2 cups thinly sliced Vidalia sweet onion

Preparation

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Stir the mayonnaise, Swiss cheese, Parmesan cheese and Vidalia onion together in a casserole dish.
3. Bake in the preheated oven until the edges are golden brown, about 30 to 35 minutes.
4. Allow to cool at least 10 minutes before serving.

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