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Volume 18

Number 2

©Vinesse Wine Club 2010

SKU 15828

The Grapevine

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER FOR VINESSE WINE CLUB MEMBERS



What the Nose Knows... and What You Can Learn From It

Exploring Sonoma Valley During the Olive Season

Living Next to a Vineyard: Home Sweet Wine Home

Bordeaux Wines: You Can Take Them to the Bank(s)

You Must Eat Your Veggies, But Don't Forget the Wine!

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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

Wine Bottles: Size Matters

By Robert Johnson

They say you can tell a lot about a man by the size of his shoes.

Ahem, but does the same hold true for wine bottles? Sometimes.

Take the magnum, as an example. The magnum (or mag, for short) holds two standard-sized bottles of wine, or a total of 1.5 liters. In a supermarket... or a drug store with a liquor license... one generally should avoid this size, as it's typically used for bottom-of-the-barrel wines. You get a lot of wine for the money, but the wine usually isn't very good.

In France, however, magnums and bottles that are larger still are symbols of quality. When sealed properly, wine stored in larger bottles will age gracefully for longer periods of

time. For those who can afford it, the magnum is the preferred size for the outstanding bottlings of Bordeaux, Burgundy and Champagne.

There are more than a dozen wine bottle sizes, ranging from the split (which you may be served in coach class on an airplane) at 187-ml. to the Nebuchadnezzar, which seldom is seen outside of the Champagne region and holds the equivalent of 20 standard-size bottles. Larger bottles have been made over the years, but they're typically one-offs made for special occasions.

The largest bottle ever made held the equivalent of 173 bottles, and was dubbed "Maximus." It was commissioned for a charitable auction.

The Czech glassblower's shoe size is not known.

KNOW YOUR BOTTLE SIZES

Name	Bottle Equivalent	Capacity
Spilt	Quarter Bottle	187 ml.
Half Bottle	Half Bottle	375 ml.
Bottle (Standard)	One Bottle	750 ml.
Magnum	Two Bottles	1.5 liters
Marie-Jeanne (1)	Three Bottles	2.25 liters
Jeroboam (3)	Four Bottles	3 liters
Double Magnum (3)	Four Bottles	3 liters
Jeroboam (4)	Six Bottles	4.5 liters
Rehoboam	Six Bottles	4.5 liters
Impériale	Eight Bottles	6 liters
Methuselah (2)	Eight Bottles	6 liters
Salamanazar	Twelve Bottles	9 liters
Balthazar (1)	Sixteen Bottles	12 liters
Nebuchadnezzar (1)	Twenty Bottles	15 liters

(1) Used only in Champagne region. (2) Used only in Burgundy region. (3) Used in Champagne and Burgundy regions. (4) Used only in Bordeaux region.



How to Make Your Nose Smarter

Food may be the way to a man's heart, but keep in mind that the food goes through his nose before it reaches his stomach.

In other words, a huge part of enjoying food involves smelling it. Don't believe it? Then try this trick: Place pieces of four different types of food with similar textures on a plate, then close your eyes and have a friend hand you a forkful of one of the items — but before you bring the fork to your mouth, squeeze your nose so you can't smell the food. Once the food is in your mouth, try to identify it. Trust us, it's not as easy as it sounds.

Because the aroma of food is so closely associated with its flavor, it should come as no surprise that some of the best wine judges in the world also are very good cooks — or, at the very least, very discerning diners. The trait they share is exceptional smelling skill.

How does one get better at identifying the aromas in wine? It's just like anything else: practice,

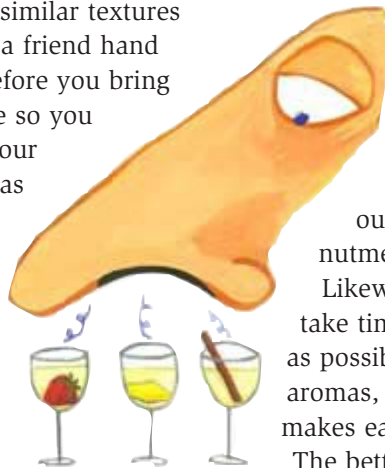
practice, practice.

The first step involves becoming more aware of the aromas you encounter during the course of the day, particularly those associated with food and the earth.

When you sit down for a meal, ask about the specific ingredients, and learn to identify their scent. Over time, you'll be able to pick out an ever-widening array of spices, such as nutmeg and basil.

Likewise, when gardening or simply out for a walk, take time to smell as many different types of flowers as possible. Make mental notes about the specific aromas, how some are sweeter than others, and what makes each flower's aroma spectrum unique.

The better you get at identifying specific aromas, the better equipped you'll be to enjoy all the wonderful aromas... and flavors... of different types of wine.



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Vinesse created the Élevant Society to meet members' demands for super-premium wines. While virtually all members of the original American Cellars Wine Club were very satisfied with their monthly selections, some wanted more, and they were willing to pay for it.

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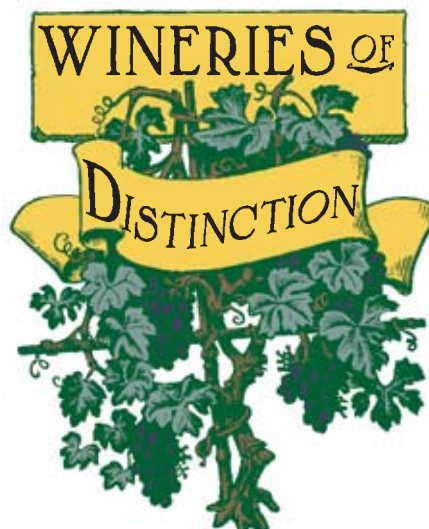
FREQUENCY:

Approximately Monthly

PRICE:

\$69.99 Average Per Shipment Plus Shipping

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Rutherford Hill: America's Most Improved Wine Estate

If there were an award for "most improved winery," Rutherford Hill Winery would be a leading candidate.

Prior to 1996, the bottlings of Rutherford Hill could be hit or miss; you might get a very nice wine, or you might get a clunker. But when Anthony Terlato and his sons, Bill and John, purchased the estate in '96, they put their years of winemaking experience to work in an effort to guarantee a

pleasant drinking experience in every bottle.

As Anthony Terlato likes to put it: "Quality is a way of life. For Rutherford Hill, it begins in the vineyards."

And what exceptional vineyards the Terlatos have at their disposal, since



Winery 4-1-1

Rutherford Hill Winery

200 Rutherford Hill Road
Rutherford, CA 94573
707-963-1871

Tasting Room Hours:

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

Reservations Suggested For:

- Merlot Blending
- Cave Tours
- Picnic Tables

Advance Orders Required For:

Box Lunches and
Other Picnic Items

Picnic Lunch Menus:

www.rutherfordhill.com/menus

the winery is located in the world-famous Napa Valley, on the eastern side of the Silverado Trail, just north of the intersection with Highway 128.

That's north in both direction and height, as Rutherford Hill is nestled high in those eastern hills, and offers a spectacular view of Napa's Rutherford bench area.

Even in its early days — the winery was founded in 1972 — the owners realized that they inhabited a very special place for winegrowing. Long before the variety became wildly popular, they recognized that the climate was quite similar to that found in the Pomerol area of Bordeaux — in other words, ideal for growing high-quality Merlot grapes.

So, while other varieties were a bit spotty on the quality scale, the Rutherford Hill Merlot was consistently good.

Today, Merlot remains the specialty of the house, and with the Terlatos overseeing the operations, the variety exhibits great complexity and character in every vintage.

With an advance reservation, visitors to the winery have an opportunity to blend their own bottle of Merlot, in effect becoming winemakers for a day.

Guests also enjoy tours of the winery's cave system (offered daily, and five times each weekend day), which is one of most extensive in America. Tunnels, galleries and passageways extend for nearly a mile, and house more than 8,000 French oak barrels. Cave tour passes are sold in the tasting room and online.

Guests also may reserve tables in the estate's picnic groves, and boxed lunches are available for groups of at least six people. (Lunches must be ordered at least 72 hours in advance.)

Of course, the winery's tasting room features a number of current releases each day. In addition to Merlot, Rutherford Hill makes Sangiovese, Malbec, Petit Verdot, Syrah, Cabernet Franc, Zinfandel Port and other bottlings. The lone white wine produced at the winery is Sauvignon Blanc.

Rutherford Hill Winery has come a long way in a very short period of time (in wine years). And as long as the Terlato family is in charge, the wines will only keep getting better in the vintages to come.



Four Seasons



WINES THAT MATCH THE SEASON.

Summer — wines for barbecues, picnics or just for sipping. Fall — wines for hearty, harvest-time dishes. You get the idea. All wines are selected by our Tasting Panel to pair beautifully with the foods you love.

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- Latest edition of The Grapevine newsletter
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WINE COLOR MIX:
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FREQUENCY:
4 times per year, plus a special holiday shipment

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TOURING TIPS

Festival — a celebration of the olive harvest combined with an agricultural and epicurean showcase.

The festival kicked off in December with the traditional “blessing of the olives” ceremony at historic Mission San Francisco Solano de Sonoma. There also has been a candlelight concert, a “feast of the olive” dinner featuring dishes prepared by top local chefs and open houses.

It all wraps up over the Presidents Day weekend with a flurry of activity, including dinners, tastings, live entertainment and an olive-focused marketplace. You can check out the remaining schedule at the festival’s Web site.

If you have two days to take in the wonders of Sonoma Valley, here’s a 10-winery itinerary that covers the southern half of the valley on the first day and the northern half on the second...

DAY ONE

On this day, you’ll explore the Sonoma side of the Carneros region, home to wineries that specialize in Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Merlot and sparkling wine.

Carneros includes parts of both Sonoma and Napa counties, but there’s a wider array of quality-focused estates on the Sonoma side.

Begin your day at Cline Cellars, where quality and value co-exist deliciously. Cline makes a wide range of wines, so you’re bound to find

2 Perfect Days in Sonoma Valley

If you look at a map of the Sonoma Valley, it’s roughly the shape of the state of California — long and narrow, with its main thoroughfare running north and south.

The valley is generally considered the birthplace of California’s wine industry. There may have been random plantings of grapevines that pre-dated those in Sonoma, but they are long gone and, more to the point, failed to spawn additional plantings to any great degree.

The closest wine region of consequence to San Francisco (about 45 miles north of The City by the Bay), it’s a rolling patchwork of vineyards, quaint farms and scenic parkland. In the center of the town of Sonoma, the eight-acre Sonoma Plaza has been designated a National Historic Landmark, home to sprawling shade trees and bordered by carefully preserved adobe buildings.

Of course, most people venture to Sonoma Valley in quest of new wine discoveries, and the destinations

available are seemingly endless, with more than 50 premium wineries available to visit. It’s not quite an A-to-Z of wine estates, but it is an A-to-W — from Adler Fels to Wellington.

The type of wine estates that you’ll find in the valley range from off-the-beaten-path, homey nooks where the person pouring samples is quite likely the winemaker, to multi-million-dollar castles that seem more European than Sonoman.

You’ll also encounter Mediterranean-style villas, garden chateaux and organic ranches. You name a type of grape farming or winemaking, and you’ll find it in the Sonoma Valley.

Festivals of various kinds dot the calendar throughout the year, and one that’s winding down right now is the three-month-long Sonoma Valley Olive

something you like.

From there, continue north on Highway 121 to Gloria Ferrer Caves & Vineyards, a top producer of sparkling wines. It's a good place to learn about the making of fine bubbly.

Just north and west of Gloria Ferrer is Schug Carneros Estate, another family operation known primarily for its Pinot Noir and Chardonnay.

At all three estates, don't be surprised to run into someone whose name is on the labels — including Gloria Ferrer herself. These are family wineries that hand-craft their bottlings, and put their names on the line with each new release.

After visiting Schug, double back to the junction of Highways 121 and 116, and follow the signs to another family operation, Gundlach Bundschu. There's a long-standing joke that trying to pronounce "Gundlach Bundschu Gewurtztraminer" makes for a dependable sobriety test, but don't presume that the family doesn't take winemaking seriously. It does, and it offers numerous bottlings for sampling each day.

Finish your first day of exploring at the Sonoma Plaza, where you'll find individual tasting rooms as well as Sonoma Enoteca, which pours selections from several wineries that are too small to have their own tasting rooms.

Spend the night in the plaza area at the Fairmont Sonoma Mission

Inn & Spa, the Sonoma Valley Inn or The Lodge at Sonoma, and get a good night's sleep because you have another busy day ahead of you.

DAY TWO

In the morning, head out from the plaza area and follow Highway 12 north to Arrowood, which continues to make one of the best bottlings of Merlot in the state.

Two more family estates are next: Mayo Family Winery, which began as a garage operation and grew steadily as word spread about the quality of the wines, and Benziger Family Winery, which offers one of the best vineyard tours in all of wine country. The folks at Mayo will be happy to provide directions to Benziger.

Continuing toward Santa Rosa, the town of Kenwood is home to numerous excellent estates. But if you enjoyed your visit to Sonoma Enoteca, you may want to head for the Family Wineries-Kenwood tasting room for another multiple-winery tasting experience.

End the day, and your 10-stop tour of Sonoma Valley, at the winery everyone has been talking about since construction work began several years ago: Ledson. If you don't know it by its name, you'll certainly recognize it by sight — you don't see too many castles in this neck of the woods.

But that's the great thing about Sonoma Valley: There is no shortage of unexpected wine pleasures.

VINESSE

Hot LIST

1 Hot Novel. The plot is thin but the imagery is wonderful in Peter Mayle's new whodunit, *The Vintage Caper*. Mayle is best known for his book, *A Year in Provence*; in fact, he has made a cottage industry in writing about the south of France. This time, the book is pure fiction — although you may recognize a few of the wine-obsessed characters.
Widely available.

2 Hot Picnic Ware. Now you can enjoy a wine country picnic without having to buy a picnic basket once you get there. Fozzils is a set of rugged dinnerware that can be folded and packed flat. A pack of two place settings costs \$24.95.
fozils.com

3 Hot Thanksgiving Wine Getaway. Some trips need to be planned in advance, and the annual winery open house weekend in Oregon's Willamette Valley is one of them. Lodging in the area is somewhat limited, and unless you want to stay in Portland and commute each day, early reservations are recommended. The event takes place over the Thanksgiving weekend, when dozens of tasting rooms host an array of special events and limited tastings, and other wineries open their doors to the public for the only time all year.
oregonwinecountry.org

For Further Information

**Sonoma Valley
Olive Festival**
olivefestival.com

Cline Cellars
clinecellars.com

**Gloria Ferrer
Caves & Vineyards**
gloriaferrer.com

Schug Carneros Estate
schugwinery.com

Gundlach Bundschu
gunbun.com

Sonoma Enoteca
sonoma-enoteca.com

**Fairmont Sonoma
Mission Inn & Spa**
fairmont.com/Sonoma

Sonoma Valley Inn
sonomavalleyinn.com

The Lodge at Sonoma
thelodgeatsonoma.com

Arrowood
arrowoodvineyards.com

Mayo Family Winery
mayofamilywinery.com

Benziger Family Winery
benziger.com

**Family Wineries-
Kenwood**
familywines.com

**Ledson Winery
& Vineyards**
ledson.com



Zinfandel. The most widely planted red grape variety in California — until 1998, when it was surpassed by Cabernet Sauvignon.

Assyriko. A dry white wine from the Greek island of Santorini, possessing a floral aroma and honey-like flavor. You can find it at many Greek restaurants, where it matches well with many of the white-meat dishes.

Barossa Valley. A wine district in South Australia known primarily for its zippy Shiraz wines and its lively renditions of Riesling.

Cuvier. The building on a French winemaking estate where the wine is made. The *cuvier* is part of the *chateau*, and the chateau's storage and aging cellar is known as the *chai*.

Dornfelder. An easy-drinking red wine from Germany, noted for its floral and vanilla aromas and its velvety finish that's somewhat reminiscent of Pinot Noir's.

VINESSE STYLE

THE WINE COUNTRY LIFESTYLE

Have you ever dreamed of living in a home that's adjacent to a vineyard and working winery?

But have the multi-million-dollar prices in the Napa Valley virtually guaranteed that your dream will never become a reality?

Tom Swarthout, a Chicago area developer, may have the solution. He's planning to develop just under three dozen homes on land in Lake Forest, Ill., north of Chicago, and to transform an old

stable and caretaker's lodge on the property into a working winery.

The homes won't be cheap — most likely priced from the high \$700,000s to no more than \$2.5 million — but they would be within the price range of more people than most homes in Napa.

English cottage architecture is what Swarthout envisions for the homes, which would range in size from 3,000 to 4,000 square feet.

A vintner already has been lined up, and Swarthout is convinced that winegrapes could be grown successfully in the sometimes-harsh climate.

"People say, 'You can really grow wine in Illinois?' It's certainly a challenge to educate the world," he told the *Chicago Tribune*. "Will it be on the cover of *Wine Spectator*? Probably not. It's not

an \$80 bottle from Napa, but it's a \$25 bottle."

Association dues would finance the winemaking operation at what Swarthout is calling White Stable Vineyard, and he added that homeowners would be involved in selecting the grape varieties and blending the wines. Each owner also would receive 50 cases of wine each vintage, assuming Mother Nature cooperates.



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FREQUENCY:

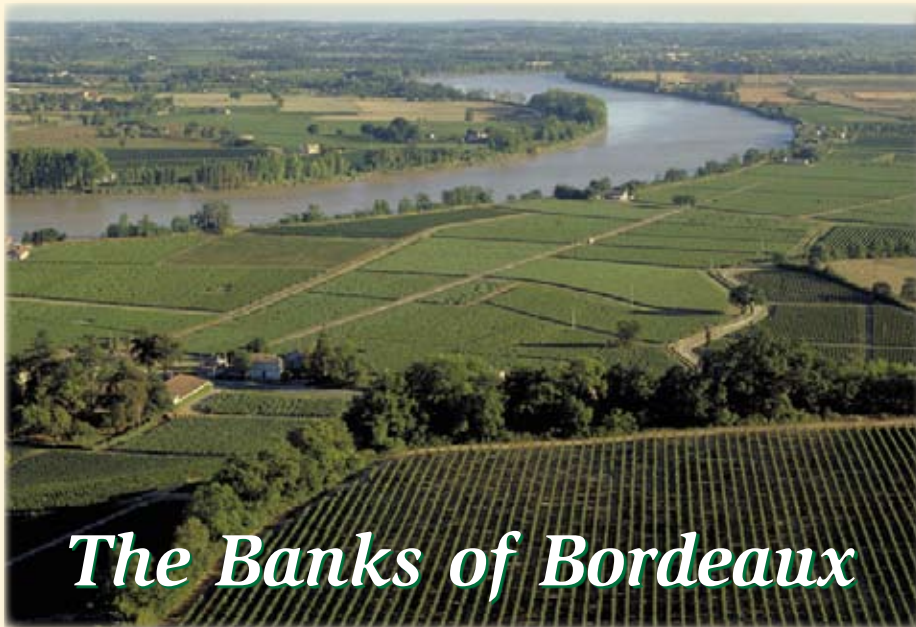
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APPELLATION SHOWCASE



The Banks of Bordeaux

In Bordeaux, several of the most famous sub-appellations have their grape-growing regimen defined by a river — specifically, the Gironde River.

Picture yourself on a boat chugging along the Gironde, heading northwest and then on out to the Atlantic Ocean. Look to your right, and you're spying an area generally referred to as the Right Bank. Look to your left, and you are gazing upon what's known as, yes, the Left Bank.

The Right Bank includes the St.-Emilion and Pomerol districts. The Left Bank encompasses numerous villages and vineyard areas, including Pauillac, Margaux, St.-Julien and St.-Estephe.



There may be very small differences in climate between the Right Bank and Left Bank, but not so much that scientists or agriculturists would recommend growing one variety of grape over another. Generally speaking, what can be grown well on one side also can be grown successfully on the other.

Yet the wines produced on the two sides of the Gironde are quite different.

On the Right Bank, a vast majority of the blends are based on Merlot or Cabernet Franc. They're quite supple and can be enjoyed within just a few years of their vintage.

On the Left Bank, Cabernet Sauvignon is the dominant variety, and it's quite common to see three or four other varieties included in the cuvees. These are bigger, bolder wines that are built to age.

Whichever "side" you take in the Great Bordeaux Debate, you're likely to be in for a memorable wine-drinking experience — and that you can take to the bank.

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WINE COLOR MIX:

Reds, Whites, or Mixed

FREQUENCY:

6 times per year

PRICE:

**\$99 Per Shipment
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Q What is the difference between Champagne and sparkling wine?

A All Champagne is sparkling wine, but not all sparkling wine is Champagne. In the past by tradition, and now by international trade law, only sparkling wines made from grapes grown in the Champagne region of France may be labeled “Champagne.” Even in France, the rule is strictly enforced, as sparkling wines made outside of the Champagne region are labeled “Cremant.” Other countries have their own names for their bubbly wines — Prosecco and Spumante in Italy, Cava in Spain, and Sekt in Germany. A few American wineries are “grandfathered in” and may print “Champagne” on their labels if they wish to, the most prominent being Korbel in Sonoma County.

Some people who have allergic reactions to wine also may be more prone to hangovers after consuming a bit more than they should. For everyone else, the best way to avoid a hangover — which normally is caused by dehydration — is to drink plenty of water while consuming the wine. Match water with wine glass-by-glass, at a minimum. Two glasses of water for each one glass of wine is better.



“ In the entire world there are only a few sounds that bring joy to all but the most jaded. One is the murmur of a kitten purring. Another is the thwack of a well-pitched baseball hitting a perfectly swung bat. And the third is the pop of a cork being pulled from a bottle of wine. ”



— George Taber

If you had to give up either wine or sex for an entire month, which would be the most difficult? In a 2004 survey conducted by *Wine* magazine, 35% said that wine would be the most difficult to do without, while 29% indicated they’d miss sex the most. Other “necessities of life” that garnered votes: caffeine, 15%; television, 11%; chocolate, 5%; shopping, 3%; and golf, 2%. There’s gotta be a Tiger Woods joke here somewhere...

The California Sustainable Winegrowing Alliance has announced the introduction of a statewide certification program that provides third-party verification of a winery or vineyard’s adherence to a “process of continuous improvement” in the adoption and implementation of sustainable winegrowing practices. Open to all California wineries and vineyards



as a voluntary option, CSWA’s new program, Certified California Sustainable Winegrowing, requires applicants to meet 58 prerequisite criteria to be eligible for

the program, assess winery and/or vineyard operations, create and implement an annual action plan and show improvement over time. The goals of the new certification program are to enhance transparency, encourage statewide participation and advance the entire California wine industry toward best practices in environmental stewardship, conservation of natural resources and socially equitable business practices.

As any fan of James Bond knows, 007 is an avid wine drinker, with a particular affinity for Champagne. In “Goldfinger,” he was seen drinking wine so often that it’s amazing he ever was able to perform his spy duties. At various junctures, Bond imbibed on Pommery pink Champagne, Piesporter Goldtropfchen, Mouton Rothschild (vintage 1947), Rosé d’Anjou, Macon and Fendant. The latter is a white wine from Switzerland, which he enjoyed with dinner in Geneva.



12 Percentage of California wines with alcohol levels of 14% or higher. Ten years ago, less than 4% of Golden State wines had that level of alcohol. In general, higher-alcohol wines have bolder, more fruit-forward flavors and can be enjoyed upon release. Wines lower in alcohol have more muted flavors in their youth and require more time in the cellar before they “open up” completely.

FOOD & WINE PAIRINGS

VEGETABLES

Pairing wine with vegetables, in general, can be a somewhat challenging task. But if we had to choose just one veggie to single out as the No. 1 Enemy of the wine world, it would be asparagus.

That's sad, because so many people love it for so many good reasons — it's low in calories, very low in sodium and contains no cholesterol. It's also packed with a bunch of health-beneficial vitamins.

Whether it's topped with hollandaise sauce or Parmesan cheese, or served plain alongside a nice cut of steak, asparagus adds a lot of flavor to a meal.

But it's that assertive flavor that can make selecting a complementary wine a real challenge. In a vast majority of cases, asparagus will make the wine taste vegetal. And if you want "vegetal" in your glass, you could have had a V8.

That said, there *is* a way that you can make asparagus and wine more compatible. We'll share that with you in a moment, so keep reading...

Another challenging veggie is artichoke, which has a flavor that can make wine taste sweet. You can serve it with a sauce and then match the wine to the sauce,



but if you serve it plain, only a bone-dry wine will work. Perhaps the best pairing partner is Brut Champagne.

Then there's the tomato (which, we know, technically is a fruit). The challenge it presents is its ultra-high acidity, and that calls for a similarly acidic wine, regardless of color. Try a Rosé crafted from one or more of the grape varieties of Chateaufeuf du Pape — particularly Grenache and

Syrah.

Which brings us back to the problem child known as asparagus. To make it more wine-friendly, try grilling it, which sweetens the flavor a bit. Then serve it with a wine that is high in acid and also has bright fruit flavors. A good bet: Sauvignon Blanc from New Zealand. Another pairing partner that works better than most: Pinot Noir.

Hey, you've got to eat your veggies, but it need not be at the expense of a good glass of wine.

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& Sweet

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- Wines selected from top regions around the world.

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- Detailed Tasting Notes for each featured wine
- Latest edition of The Grapevine newsletter

WINE COLOR MIX:

Mostly White; Occasionally Blush/Pink or Sparkling

FREQUENCY:

Approximately Every Other Month

PRICE:

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FRENCH GOUGERES

Not planning a trip to Burgundy this year? Then enjoy a taste of that wonderful region of France at home with this popular pre-meal snack, which matches beautifully with red Burgundy wine — or American Pinot Noir. This recipe makes 10-12 servings.

Ingredients

- 1 1/2 cups water
- 1/2 cup butter, cut into cubes
- 1 1/2 cups unbleached, all-purpose flour
- 6 large eggs
- 1 cup grated (packed) Gruyere cheese
- 1/2 cup (packed) high-quality Parmesan cheese
- 1 1/2 tsp. fresh ground pepper
- 1 1/4 tsp. salt

Preparation

1. Place one rack in top third and a second rack in bottom third of oven, and preheat to 400 degrees. Line two rimmed baking sheets with parchment paper, lightly greased with non-stick cooking spray.
2. In a 3- to 4-quart pan over medium heat, bring water, butter and salt to a simmer, stirring until butter melts. Add flour, and stir rapidly with a wooden spoon until mixture is a smooth, thick paste with no lumps. Remove pan from heat and allow mixture to cool.
3. Using a hand-held mixer, beat in one egg at a time until all are incorporated. Stir in cheese and pepper.
4. Bake until dough is puffed and looks dry and golden brown, about 30 minutes. Fifteen minutes into the baking period, reverse the positions of the baking pans in the oven.

BEEF GOULASH

Paprika is among the dominant flavors of this dish from Austria, and because of that spice element, complementary wines would include Zinfandel and Barbera. This recipe makes 10-12 servings, and is best enjoyed with tender egg noodles.

Ingredients

- 2 1/2 lbs. beef chuck, trimmed of excess fat
- 2 lbs. onions, diced (about 7 medium onions)
- 1 clove garlic, finely chopped
- 1 tbsp. vegetable oil
- 1/4 cup red wine vinegar
- 2 tbsp. paprika
- 1 bay leaf
- 1/2 tsp. ground marjoram
- 1/2 tsp. ground caraway
- 3 1/2 cups beef stock

Preparation

1. Cut beef into 1-inch cubes. Brown meat in oil in batches. Remove to bowl and set aside.
2. Sauté onions and garlic until limp. Add vinegar, stirring to deglaze pan. Add remaining ingredients and stir to blend. Heat to a boil, then reduce to a simmer and cover. Cook until very tender, gradually adding beef stock (about 3-4 hours).
3. Remove bay leaf and serve.

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