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# The Grapevine

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER FOR VINESSE WINE CLUB MEMBERS

## **The Pop Wine Phenomenon**

**An Armchair Tour  
of Chateau Latour**

**Preview: Sonoma  
Jazz + Festival**

**Labels That Mean  
What They Say**

**Secrets of the  
Sierra Foothills**

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## EDITOR'S JOURNAL

# The Never-Ending 'Pop Wine' Wars

By Robert Johnson

*There has long been a somewhat snobbish attitude in America that anything that is popular can't possibly be good.*

That's why genres such as "pop music" and "pop art" are looked down upon by those supposedly in the know. Among music fans, it's much more hip, so the perception goes, to be into jazz or alt-country. Among art patrons, an appreciation for impressionism or surrealism is the price of admission to the most esteemed galleries.

The world of wine is not immune to this pop culture phenomenon. Wine aficionados turn up their noses and roll their eyes at the best-selling wines of the day, insisting that only pricey Bordeaux or Napa Valley "cult" Cabernet Sauvignon is worthy of their dining room table.

And this is nothing new. It dates back to the 1960s — roughly the same period as the blooming of the pop art era — when the popularity of fruit-flavored wines such as Annie Green Springs and Strawberry Hill sent shivers down the spines of the wine snobs.

It continued into the 1970s, when a group of light-bodied wines

from Italy, collectively known as Lambrusco, became widely popular across America. Remember Reunite? Its makers even went so far as to suggest serving it over ice. (Oh, the humanity!) At its height of popularity, Reunite was selling more than 10 million cases per year.

Then came the 1980s, and the birth of the wine cooler. Commercials for Bartles and Jaymes were ubiquitous as those fictional characters fought for

supermarket shelf space and brand superiority with Seagram's Golden Cooler, Sun Country and others. Wine coolers were widely derided by the wine cognizati... and sold like gangbusters.

White Zinfandel was the successor to the wine cooler on the "pop wine" charts, and its popularity has waned only slightly.

To this day, when

someone orders a glass of Zinfandel in a restaurant, it's a good idea for the server to verify whether the customer actually means White Zin.

My take on the never-ending skirmish between what's popular and what's "good"? The same as it always has been: Drink what you like.

*On the cover and on this page: "Still Life With Red Wine," by Roy Lichtenstein (1972).*







## ‘Wines of a Place’ Now More Than Just a Concept

***The concept of truth in advertising certainly should extend to wine labels.***

That’s why the Napa Ridge brand of wines caused such a stir at the dawning of the new millennium. There is no geographic place known as “Napa Ridge,” and there wasn’t even a Napa Ridge Winery. Vintners in real parts of the Napa Valley took umbrage with the Napa name being hijacked (as they put it), and a lengthy court battle ensued.

The very public debate over the use of the Napa name in a non-Napa wine helped fuel interest in protecting wine region names around the world. In 2005, representatives of seven regions signed a “Joint Declaration to Protect

Wine Place Names & Origin.”

Now, there are more than double that number of signatories, with the recent additions of Long Island in New York, and Rioja in Spain.

The list also includes: Champagne, Chianti Classico, Jerez, Napa Valley, Oregon, Paso Robles, Porto, Sonoma County, Victoria, Tokaj, Walla Walla Valley, Washington (state) and Western Australia.

“On behalf of all the bodegas that make up the DOC Rioja, we are thrilled to join the Declaration partners,” said Rioja representative Victor Pascual Artacho, “and express our unequivocal support for the integrity of wine place names.”

Added Artacho: “No matter where a wine comes from, consumers deserve to know if the wine they drink is what it says it is on the label.”



*It used to be that California wineries could call their wines whatever they wanted — including geographic names from other countries, such as Sauternes and Burgundy. Today, more and more countries and regions are agreeing to fight that misleading practice.*



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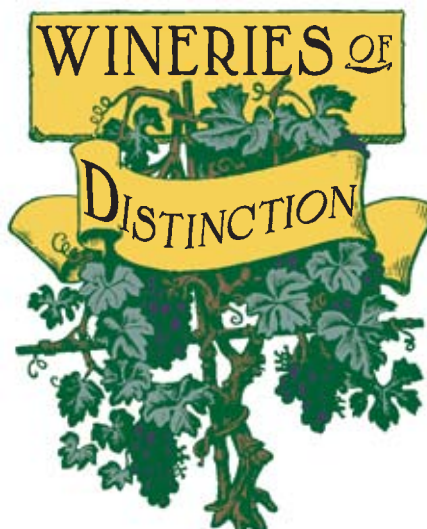
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## Chateau Latour: It's the Water... and a Lot More



**M**any of the famous chateaux of Bordeaux look pretty much the same from a distance. But not Chateau Latour.

The Latour estate is defined, architecturally, by its iconic tower. Built between 1620 and 1630, it was constructed to serve as a pigeon house. A different tower once graced the property, in a different location. The Saint-Maubert Tower, as it was

known, was built during the 14th century, but historical records proffer more questions than answers about its ultimate fate.

Located in the famous Medoc wine region, about 40 kilometers northwest of the city of Bordeaux, the vineyard of



Chateau Latour belongs to the Pauillac appellation. The quality of its wine is credited partly to the type of grape varieties being used, and also to the exceptional combination of natural elements (geography, geology and climate) that constitutes its *terroir*.

Today, the estate consists of 78 hectares of vineyards. The 47 hectares which surround the chateau — the heart of the estate — are called *l'Enclos*. Only the grapes from those 47 hectares are used to make the “Grand Vin de Chateau Latour.”

This *Enclos* benefits from a unique *terroir* that combines optimized sub-soil nutrition for the vines; the Gironde River, which tempers extreme weather conditions; and a typical Medoc climate, largely influenced by the Atlantic Ocean. This combination of factors enables the grapes to reach maturation dependably and in the best of health.

Of course, the *terroir* also dictates the grape varieties to be farmed, and Cabernet Sauvignon accounts for about 80 percent of the plantings on the estate. Cabernet manages to take the best out of the poor gravelly soil by digging deep into the layers of clay to reach its water source. This brings great concentration, deep color and tannic structure when the grapes are transformed into wine.

Merlot represents 18 percent of the “Grand Vin,” and plays an important role in regulating and softening the

Cabernet Sauvignon. It is planted mainly on the lower parcels of the *Enclos*, where the gravel layers are a little less deep, and where the marls and clay layers can be reached more easily by the vines.

Two other grape varieties — Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot — account for 2 percent of the total planted vineyard, and in most cases are mixed in with the parcels of Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot.

In addition to the “Grand Vin,” Chateau Latour makes two other bottlings.

“Les Fortes de Latour” is crafted from the younger vines of *l'Enclos*, along with three lots outside. More Merlot (about 30 percent of the cuvee) and less Cabernet Sauvignon (about 70 percent) than in the “Grand Vin” is used.

A third bottling, known as the Pauillac, was introduced in 1973, but then did not appear again until 1987. Since 1990, it has been released in each succeeding vintage. It is made from grapes grown on younger vines outside *l'Enclos*.

There is an old Medoc proverb that states, “Only the vines that overlook the water are capable of producing wines of great quality.” Situated just 300 meters from the Gironde River, the vines of Chateau Latour fit that description, and continue to produce wines that are coveted the world over.

## Winery 4-1-1

### Chateau Latour

Saint-Lambert  
33250 Pauillac  
France

Phone: +33-5-56-73-19-80

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### Tours:

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Note: No Public Sale of  
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# The Wonders of Australia's Hunter Valley



***To visit the Hunter Valley is to experience and enjoy the good things in Australian life... and to reward yourself.***

The Hunter Valley is Australia's oldest wine region. This is the home of world-class Hunter Valley Semillon that has been called "Australia's unique gift to the world," wonderful Australian Shiraz that ages gracefully for years, and generations of family winemakers who love to tell their tales.

Add to this a wide array of traditional and contemporary delights — things you'd expect of a world-famous wine region — and you'll find Hunter Valley wine country one of the most vibrant and relaxing places to visit.

There is no shortage of choices as the region is home to more than 60

world-class restaurants, 120 wineries, 160 accommodation venues (Aussie-speak for lodging) and a vast range of activities.

Less than two hours from Sydney by car and just 45 minutes from Newcastle Airport, Hunter Valley is easily accessible for Australia visitors.

Vineyards were first established in the valley in the 1830s. Since that time, the area has grown both in size and recognition, and most of the original families are still there. Proud of their heritage and of what the region has become, locals have done everything to create the perfect escape.

Visitors can discover the best regional produce — such as cheeses and olive oil — and enjoy the culinary artistry of acclaimed chefs who have their own unique, distinctly Australian styles.

By day, you can walk, ride or drive through the sweeping vine-lined hills. For those looking to explore, there



## TOURING TIPS

are many aspects of the Hunter Valley unknown to most visitors, and locals are happy to share their "secrets."

Whether it's a little-known cellar door (Aussie-speak for a winery's tasting room)... an antique shop hidden down a quiet lane... historic towns... or ancient indigenous sites, there is something nearby just waiting to be discovered.

When it comes to eating, the Hunter Valley is abundant with choice. Scattered among the vines are 60



restaurants run by winery owners, providing the ultimate in food-and-wine pairing opportunities. After all, who knows a wine's best pairing partners better than the person who made it?

On a sunny day, you can collect a feast of local produce from the cheese shops, olive mills and wineries, and stop at one of the picnic spots along the road to take in the marvelous scenery. Hunter Valley also is home to several renowned golf courses.

Although famous for its food and wine, the Hunter Valley also has

made a name for itself by producing spectacular events. There are festivals celebrating the local produce, and concerts featuring the world's top musicians.

In fact, one could build a vacation around one of these events. (See the accompanying box for a list of upcoming events in 2010.)

*To learn more about the Hunter Valley, and for links to a vast array of hotels, B&Bs and winery accommodations, log on to [www.winecountry.com/au](http://www.winecountry.com/au).*

## Hunter Valley Calendar of Wine Events

- ❖ **May 15-16 — Lovedale Long Lunch.** Seven boutique wineries open their doors to share their wines, paired with sumptuous treats prepared by top local chefs.  
[www.lovedalelonglunch.com](http://www.lovedalelonglunch.com)
- ❖ **June — Hunter Valley Wine & Food Month.** A vast array of wine-focused events unfold throughout the month of June at various locations.  
[www.hvwineandfood.hvva.com.au](http://www.hvwineandfood.hvva.com.au)
- ❖ **September Date TBA — Hunter Valley Blues, Roots, Funk 'n Grooves.** Six hours of non-stop music on two stages, accompanied by great food and wine.  
[www.funkngrooves.com.au](http://www.funkngrooves.com.au)
- ❖ **October 8-10 — Hunter Semillon & Seafood.** Fifty local wineries pour Hunter Valley's signature white wine, while local restaurants serve up fresh seafood. The event also features live entertainment, cooking demonstrations and wine education opportunities.  
[www.huntersemillonandseafood.com.au](http://www.huntersemillonandseafood.com.au)
- ❖ **October 30 — Jazz in the Vines.** Tyrrell's Vineyards hosts Australia's biggest jazz names for a full-day party with plenty of wine and food.  
[www.jazzinthevines.com.au](http://www.jazzinthevines.com.au)

# VINESSE

## Hot LIST

**1 Hot Wine Country Event.** Hard to believe, but the Passport to Dry Creek Valley will celebrate its 20th anniversary April 23-25. Kicking off the weekend that Friday evening will be Gateway to Passport — A First Class Experience, a culinary event at which celebrity chef Charlie Palmer will create dishes to pair with limited-production Dry Creek Valley wines. Then over the weekend, close to four dozen wineries will welcome guests, and live entertainment — ranging from jazz to belly dancing — will be featured at nearly every one of them. Tickets traditionally have sold out quickly, so if you're thinking of going, order soon.  
[www.wdcv.com](http://www.wdcv.com)

**2 Hot New Wine Web Site.** If you're a Zinfandel lover, you need to know about the new organization of Napa Valley Zinfandel producers. The group is offering touring and other information under the banner of the Napa Zinfandel Trail. A list of wineries, maps, events and other information is available on the site.  
[www.napazintrail.com](http://www.napazintrail.com)

**3 New iPhone App.** Wouldn't it be great if there were a single source of information on Sonoma County's wineries, restaurants, spas, hotels, recreational activities, shopping and wine events? Well, now, there's an app for that! It's called "iVisit Sonoma County," and it's now available for download.  
*Apple's App Store on iTunes*





**Kabinett.** In Germany’s wine category system, the lightest and least sweet designation.

**Legs.** The drops of wine on the inner portion of a glass after the wine has been swirled. Contrary to popular belief, those drops reveal little about the wine.

**Mature.** Describes a wine that is ready to drink.

**Noble Rot.** A beneficial mold that forms on grapes left on the vine long after they’ve reached full maturity. The mold causes the grapes to shrivel and concentrate their sugars — one key step in the making of ice wine or late harvest wine.

**Oaky.** An aroma and flavor associated with wine aged in oak barrels.

**Palate.** The feel (texture) and flavor of wine in one’s mouth.

## VINESSE STYLE

### SONOMA JAZZ + FESTIVAL

*A lot of great jazz music can be heard during the Sonoma Jazz + Festival, which will take place May 21-23 in downtown Sonoma, Calif.*

But when you get right down to it, the festival is much more about the “plus.” While jazz music certainly is represented among the festival’s headliners, there actually will be more music from various other genres to be savored.

Take a look at the list of main stage headliners: Lizz Wright... Crosby, Stills and Nash... Poncho Sanchez... Earth, Wind and Fire... The Neville Brothers... Elvis Costello and the Sugarcanes. It promises to be three evenings of musical memories.

But jazz purists need not fret. “Wine & Song Around the Plaza” will offer a total of seven hours of jazz listening opportunities during the afternoon hours that Saturday and Sunday. Guests may stroll from venue to venue around the historic Sonoma Plaza and take in as many as eight live music performances, a dozen adult

beverage tastings and four food tastings each day.

And for those who just can’t get enough music, “SJ+ After Dark” promises to fill the El Dorado Kitchen on Friday and Saturday



nights immediately following the main stage performances.

For those who love great music, great food and great wine, the Sonoma Jazz + Festival offers a way to fulfill all three passions with style.

*For further information, visit: [www.sonomajazz.org](http://www.sonomajazz.org).*



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## APPELLATION SHOWCASE

*Eden Vale Inn Bed and Breakfast,  
Placerville, CA*



### California's Sierra Foothills

***I***t has been called “Gold Country” since the mid-1800s when people from all over the world came to the Sierra Foothills to seek their fortunes during the great California Gold Rush. Some planted grapevines that they brought from Europe.

While the Mission grape variety dominated the early plantings, another variety — quite different — was imported from somewhere in the Adriatic region, and the wine made from this grape became known as Zinfandel.

Ask Sierra Foothills winemakers what gives the area’s wines their unusual robust taste, and they’ll tell you, “It’s the soil.”

Most of the vineyards at the 2,000-foot elevation are set in a soil made of decomposed granite, a product of erosion from the Sierra Nevada range. This granitic soil is typical of the Shenandoah Valley in Amador County, around Murphys in Calaveras County, and in the Fair Play/Somerset area in El Dorado County.

At the higher El Dorado elevations (close to 3,000 feet), the soil is composed of finely crushed volcanic

rock, thrown up by volcanoes in the Lake Tahoe area some 10 million years ago. Lava Cap Winery takes its name from this soil.

Both types of soil have good drainage and very few nutrients, making the vines send their roots deep into the ground to hunt for food and water. The substantial root structure provides the grapes with the flavors of the specific vineyard site.

Some of the vineyards are dry farmed, with no summertime irrigation. These vines bask in the intense sunshine, and produce grapes with skins that have a deep blue/black color.

Stressed vines produce richer, more deeply flavored wines, and in the Sierra Foothills, that means mostly Zinfandel, Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah.

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“You don’t need to dwell on a wine. It’s that first experience that you get. So you tend to be fairly quick with your decision-making.”



— Veteran vintner Daryl Groom, quoted in the Milwaukee Journal, on his approach to judging in wine competitions.

**Q** I’ve noticed in your breakdown of wine varieties that come with the club Tasting Notes, Pinot Noir is never blended with other varieties. Why is that?

**A** “Never” would be an overstatement, but blending other varieties with Pinot Noir is extremely rare. Experienced vintners know that when Pinot comes in contact with other varieties, it tends to be overwhelmed; it becomes difficult to identify any of its characteristics. Whereas Cabernet Sauvignon can beef up Merlot, and Merlot can smooth out Cabernet, there doesn’t seem to be a variety that can do anything besides compromising a good Pinot.



**W**hen a magnitude-8.8 earthquake hit Chile, the country’s wine industry did not escape Mother Nature’s wrath. Across Chile’s wine regions, storage tanks cracked, barrels burst and bottles shattered. Nobody could venture a guess regarding the totality of the damage, but at Vinos de Chile, which is the country’s largest association of wine growers, losses were estimated at \$250,000. In the Colchagua Valley, earthquake damage equated with lost jobs — not good news, considering 20% of the people in the city of Santa Cruz make their living, in one way or another, from the wine industry. Several U.S.-based wine companies with interests in the Chilean wine industry have made or pledged donations to the relief effort.

35,000

Number of tons of Riesling — Washington state’s No. 1 winegrape — harvested in 2009. Chardonnay was close behind with 34,700 tons.



**A**ndy Beckstoffer, recently elected to the Culinary Institute of America’s Vintners Hall of Fame, has contributed two new conservation easements totaling 92 acres to the Napa County Land Trust. The two new easements are part of the Beckstoffer Georges III Vineyard, which produces fruit for such award-winning Cabernet Sauvignon wines as Schrader GIII, Zahtila and 12C. “What makes Napa Valley unique is the quality of the grapes we grow here,” says Beckstoffer.

“We have to preserve that, because if we fall short, these wines will disappear. We can’t let that happen.” Over the past few years, Beckstoffer, a member of the board of directors of the Land Trust, has established a total of nine conservation easements with the Land Trust of Napa County, totaling more than 419 acres. “I would like to see all the great heritage vineyards in the Napa Valley placed under these conservation easements,” says Beckstoffer. For Joel Tranmer, CEO of the Napa County Land Trust, these easements stand as clear examples of Beckstoffer’s leadership in this area. “Andy is making a statement here about private land ownership. He is committed to agricultural preservation,” said Tranmer. “I believe that will be his legacy — as a preservationist as much as a grower of world-class grapes.”



**F**or the first time ever — or, at least for as long as such records have been kept — the British are drinking more wine from South Africa than from France. The reason is simple: price. The United Kingdom’s economy is dictating that many people who love to drink wine must seek out more affordable bottlings. That’s why sales of South African wines are up 20% over a year ago, whereas sales of French wine are down 12%. As Jo Mason, the U.K. market manager for Wines of South Africa, put it: “The wine landscape has changed completely.”



## FOOD & WINE PAIRINGS

### MAINTAINING A HEALTHY DIET

***T***here is a general belief among dieters that wine is fattening.

It's not that our favorite adult beverage is soaked with saturated fat. The calories in wine come from the alcohol and, to a lesser extent, any remaining sugars following the fermentation process.

Yes, those calories would add up if one were to go overboard in their consumption. But the same thing holds true for soda pop. As with all things involving diet, the one word to remember is "moderation."

But last month, even the naysayers had to take a step back and reassess their views. That's because a study conducted by the Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston was released, and that study showed wine offers certain benefits to dieters.

It wasn't just a matter of wine not being "so bad." This study revealed actual benefits of wine consumption for those seeking to lose weight.

For the study, 19,200 American women age 30 and over were grilled (okay, perhaps *asked* would be a more health-conscious word) about their drinking habits. Then, over a period of 13 years, their weight losses and

gains were closely monitored.

It should come as no surprise that virtually all of the women gained weight. That's what happens when most of us reach the big 4-oh. But here's the news that should make all wine drinkers raise a toast: Those who said they do not drink — about 40 percent of the survey group — gained more weight than those who drank in... here's that word again... moderation.

Of spirits, wine and beer, the study showed that wine added the fewest inches to the waistline. And get this: A person is likely to put on more weight from consuming a 550-calorie steak than a 570-calorie bottle of Champagne. Researchers theorize that the liver breaks down alcohol differently, transforming it into heat rather than fat.

Bottom line: Eat a slice of pizza, and much of it will be turned into fat. Drink a 120-calorie glass of wine, and most of it will be burned off.

A caveat: Alcohol is believed to play a big role in the increasing occurrences of breast cancer in women. So, don't drink that whole bottle of wine. Again, doctors recommend enjoying wine in moderation.

And we recommend pairing it, whenever possible, with heart-healthy food.



Light & Sweet

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### NAPA CRAB CAKES

Casa Nuestra makes one of California's best bottlings of Chenin Blanc, and recommends serving that variety with this recipe, which makes 4 servings.

#### Ingredients

- 2 large eggs
- ½ cup mayonnaise
- 1 cup Japanese seasoned bread crumbs
- 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- Half the juice of a freshly squeezed lemon
- ½ teaspoon Old Bay seasoning
- 1 shallot, minced
- 1 stalk celery, finely chopped
- ¼ bell pepper, finely chopped
- Tabasco sauce, to taste
- 4 oz. sweet butter
- 1 lb. fresh lump crabmeat, pressed and drained
- Kosher salt and white pepper, to taste

#### Preparation

1. Whisk all wet ingredients, including eggs, to combine. Add lightly sautéed chopped and minced vegetables, with Old Bay seasoning. Add salt and pepper, to taste.
2. Add crushed bread crumbs, then carefully fold in crabmeat.
3. Form 4 equally sized cakes. (Cakes should be loose, but not falling apart. Firmness can be adjusted with additional bread crumbs, if desired.)
4. Preheat a sauté pan over medium heat. Add butter, and fry the cakes until golden brown on both sides, approximately 3 minutes per side, making sure cake is cooked through.
5. Serve over a bed of baby greens and garnish with tartar sauce.

### TURKEY MEATLOAF

Try this recipe, which makes 4 servings, with Pinot Noir or a lighter-style Zinfandel.

#### Ingredients

- 2½ lbs. lean ground turkey
- 2 eggs
- 4 stalks celery
- 2 large carrots
- 1 red bell pepper
- ½ yellow onion
- 1 cup flavored breadcrumbs
- ¼ tsp. fresh-ground black pepper
- ¼ tsp. red pepper flakes
- ¼ tsp. dried oregano
- ¼ tsp. dried basil
- ½ cup ketchup
- 1 tbsp. hot sauce
- 1 tbsp. Worcestershire sauce

#### Preparation

1. Preheat oven to 425 degrees.
2. Chop celery, carrots, bell pepper and onion into small pieces. Add to a large mixing bowl with the turkey, eggs, breadcrumbs and spices. Mix well.
3. Place mixture in a large loaf pan.
4. On a lower rack in the oven, bake at 425 degrees for 10 minutes. Remove, and reduce oven temperature to 375 degrees.
5. In a small bowl, mix ketchup, hot sauce and Worcestershire sauce. Apply in a thick layer to the top of the loaf.
6. Bake for 75 minutes, remove from oven, slice and serve.

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