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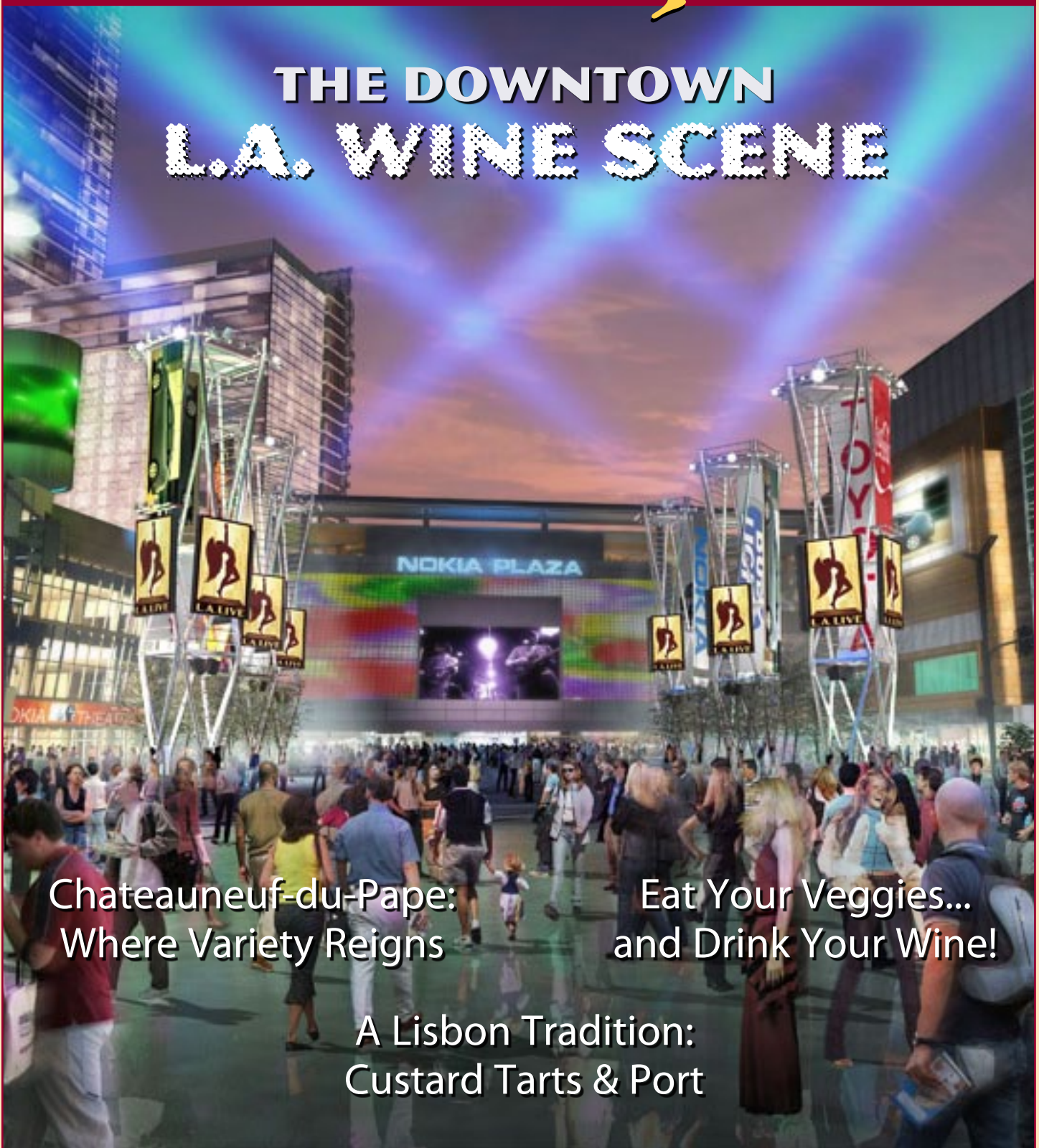
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The Grapevine

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER FOR VINESSE WINE CLUB MEMBERS

THE DOWNTOWN L.A. WINE SCENE



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EDITOR'S JOURNAL

The 'Amazon' Approach to Discovering New Wines

By Robert Johnson

Was it Amazon.com that started the "If you like such-and-such, you might like..." craze in marketing?

Visit Amazon, and you'll see that ploy... uh, concept... applied to virtually anything you could buy, from music CDs to movie DVDs, and from books to electronics. Countless other websites now have that "feature" as well.

Which got me thinking: Could the same methodology be applied to wine? My conclusion: Absolutely.

But how could that be? After all, each person has a unique palate, one that "experiences" flavors in its own way. What might taste like cherries to one person could taste like blackberries to another.

Well, it's actually that range of flavor experiences that makes wine ideal for such an exercise. The key word in the phrase, "you might like," is... *might*.

For some people, similar flavors in two different wines would provide the "linkage." For others, it might be the mouthfeel — whether a wine is light-bodied, medium-bodied for full-bodied. Another "connecting" factor could be the wine's tannin structure; some people simply don't like big tannic monsters, while others seek them out (sometimes with the idea of cellaring them for several years before uncorking them).

So, let's try the "Amazon" method

with a few well-known... and lesser-known... varieties...

• **If you like Sauvignon Blanc, you might like Torrontes.** What's the connecting factor here? Aroma. There is nothing subtle about the nose of a well-made Sauvignon Blanc. It's a grape that doesn't merely show its varietal uniqueness; it struts it. Likewise, Torrontes is known for its in-your-face aromas — very different from those of Sauvignon Blanc, but every bit as assertive.

• **If you like Merlot, you might like Cabernet Sauvignon.** The two varieties share a number of aroma and flavor impressions, but Cabernet typically is much more tannic, while Merlot is known for its "mellowness." Some would say that Cabernet is Merlot on steroids. So if you enjoy the flavors of Merlot, but would like to try a "bigger" wine, Cabernet Sauvignon is your next logical step.

• **If you like Chardonnay, you might like Viognier.** Here, the similarity is texture. If you like the mouthfeel of Chardonnay, but not necessarily all that oak, spice and butter flavor that often comes along with it... give Viognier a try.



Exploring the Fine Art of Fining

Some winemakers take great pride in letting the public know that their wines undergo “no fining.”

The main reason cited is that this common and widely accepted practice can strip wine of its “naturalness.” While that’s true to a certain degree, far more vintners utilize the practice than avoid it, and there are several reasons for doing so.

The primary purpose of fining is to clarify wine by removing the various suspended particles that remain following fermentation. These can include dead yeast cells, grape fragments, polymerized tannins, coloring phenols and proteins. Wines that are not fined can be murky and less than appealing in appearance.

But “clarification” is not the only reason for fining. The process also can be used to target and eliminate undesirable odors, to influence the wine’s flavor spectrum, and to enhance the wine’s color.

The most commonly used fining agents perform their tasks by attracting the positively and negatively charged particles in the unclear wine, as the agents also have positive and negative charges. Examples include

bentonite (-), Sparkolloid (-), gelatine (+), egg white (+), and silicon dioxide or kieselsol (-).

Most of the time, bentonite and egg whites are used by themselves, but gelatine followed by kieselsol is commonly used to fine white wines.

Egg white — or albumen — is a common fining agent for red wines because it reduces harsher tannins. Some winemakers also believe that it imparts a silky character to the wine. Egg whites are used at the rate of three to four per 25-gallon barrel.

There are numerous fining agents available to winemakers, and it’s important that each be selected and used for its intended purpose. Experienced vintners use lab tests to determine precisely how much of a given agent is needed for a specific procedure.

The ultimate goal is to craft a wine that is true to its variety or varietal mix, and is pleasant to look at, smell and taste — all without stripping the wine of its character or, worse, manipulating it to the point that its uniqueness is lost.

One could say that when vintners use fining, they walk a fine line.



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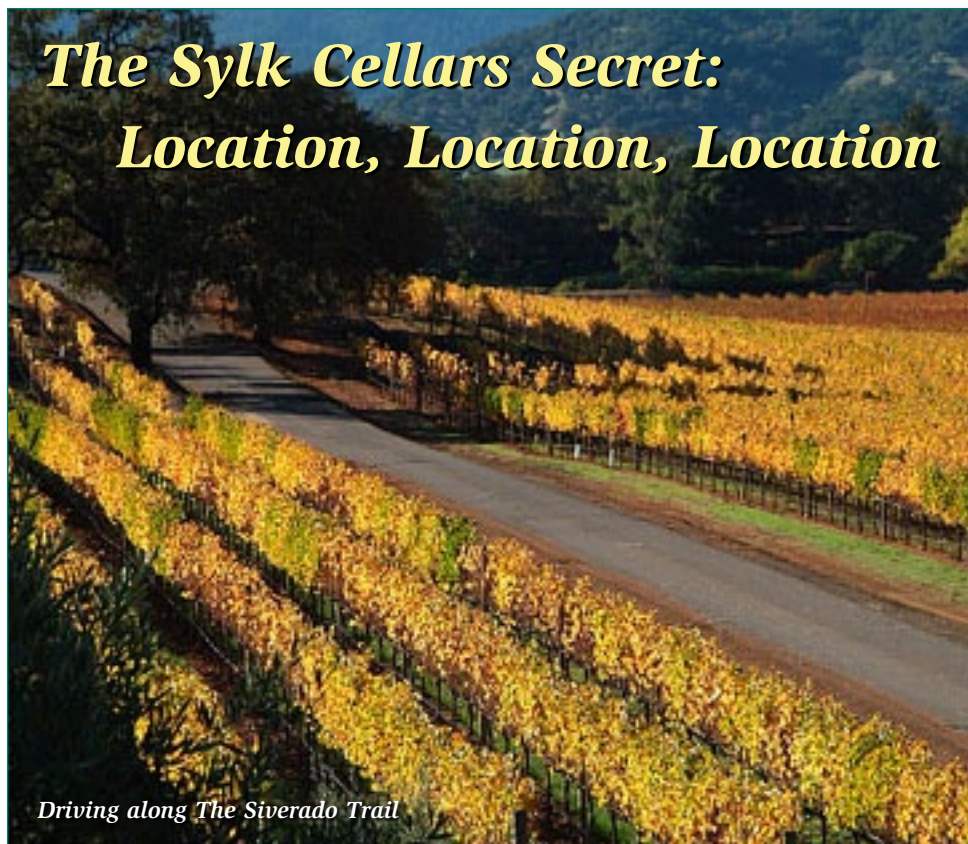
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The Sylk Cellars Secret: Location, Location, Location



Driving along The Silverado Trail

Wineries get their names in any number of ways — most commonly, from the name of the owners.

But in the case of Sylk Cellars, it's a bit more complicated. Each of the four letters in Sylk is tied to the winery's geographic location in California's Napa Valley.

The S and the L are the initials of Stags and Leap, as in Napa's Stags Leap District. The Y stands for Yountville, as in the Yountville District of Napa Valley. And the K stands for Knoll, as in the Oak Knoll District of the valley.

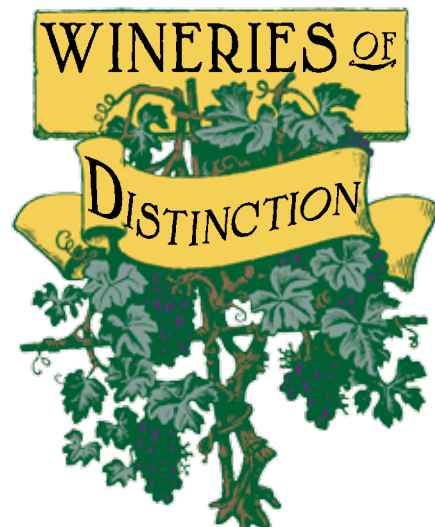
The Sylk Cellars vineyard is situated along the Silverado Trail, where it meets the southern border of the Stags Leap District and the eastern border of the Yountville District. The Oak Knoll District is just a stone's throw away.

It's a prime location, indeed, and the key to the quality of Sylk Cellars' wines.

Sylk's roots can be traced to 2001, when Carl Thorsen met Stephen Blum. Thorsen, who had retired from PriceWaterhouseCoopers, and Blum, a Los Angeles real estate developer, owned adjoining Napa Valley

properties — properties that would be ideal for growing Cabernet Sauvignon.

It turned out that the two also shared a love of wine. So, in 2002, they decided to pool their resources and plant a vineyard... knowing that it would be several years before it produced wine-quality grapes. And each year thereafter, most of the fruit would be cut from the vines to enhance cane and root structure development.





Waiting can be excruciating, but newly planted grapevines must experience several growing cycles before their fruit is wine-worthy. In the case of the Thorsen and Blum family venture, the first commercial vintage would be 2006.

That year, Bob Pepi and Jeff Booth were tasked with transforming the harvested grapes into wine. Today, Booth is in charge of the cellar, ably assisted by Thorsen, who successfully completed the winemaker program at the University of California at Davis.

With each passing year, as the vines mature, the Sylk-grown wines will become more and more complex. But the first two vintages (2006 and 2007) have been exceptional, a nod to the vineyard's location.

Karen MacNeil, author of *The Wine Bible*, has described the wines of the Stags Leap District as having "textural hedonism." In an article for the *Los Angeles Times*, she wrote:

"When you taste a typical Stags Leap District wine, you understand what all the fuss is about. What's harder to explain is precisely what it is about the soils and climate of Stags Leap that gives its Cabernets such characteristic softness and intensity.

"Yes, the coarse, eroded soils are, according to reports from U.C. Davis, unique. Yes, the bare rocks heat up the district quickly during the day. And yes, the heat drops off at night just as rapidly, as cool breezes are sucked in off the Pacific. But why this translates to textural hedonism remains a mystery."

Then there's the Yountville District which, geologically speaking, offers a diverse combination of soil

characteristics within its boundaries.

On its eastern flank, the volcanic soils are similar to those found in Stags Leap. But there also are centuries-old coastal deposits (both sedimentary and alluvial), as well as sandy and gravelly loam and some clay. It's a geomorphic combination unique in the Napa Valley.

And when the cool marine air currents from San Pablo Bay to the south reach the Yountville Mounts, they're trapped — providing natural "air conditioning" even on the hottest of summer days. This helps extend the growing season, enabling the grapes to attain full flavor development.

As for the Oak Knoll District, it enjoys one of the longest growing seasons in Napa Valley, the result of a mix of factors: a unique assortment of soils from the Dry Creek alluvial fan, less annual rainfall than the rest of the valley, and (as in Yountville) cooling marine influences.

The Sylk vineyard reflects the characteristics of these three districts, resulting in very complex wines — now and for many years to come.



Winery 4-1-1

Sylk Cellars

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When the biggest stars of television and music walk the red carpet, they do so at L.A. Live, the massive entertainment venue that has reshaped downtown Los Angeles and created a long-needed “core” for the “City of Angels.”

L.A. Live not only hosts the annual Primetime Emmy Awards and the Grammy Awards, it’s home to six live entertainment venues, 19 dining experiences, not to mention the Los Angeles Lakers, Clippers, Kings and Sparks.

It’s the place where many vacationers cap a day of touring, and for wine-focused travelers, it does not disappoint. Among the many options for a good glass or bottle are:

- **GLance** — Located at the lobby level of the JW Marriott Hotel, this wine bar offers an international selection of wines, along with seasonal small plates meant for sharing. www.lalivemarriott.com

- **Fleming’s** — Just steps from the Nokia Theatre concert venue, this L.A. Live branch of the national steakhouse chain offers exceptional steak and seafood choices, along with 100 wines by the glass. www.flemingssteakhouse.com/locations/ca/los-angeles

- **LA Market by Kerry Simon** — This restaurant echoes the excitement of the L.A. Live entertainment district,

showcasing Chef Kerry Simon’s “rock and roll” approach to modern cuisine. Helmed by Chef de Cuisine Nona Sivley — a Louisiana native and winner of “Hell’s Kitchen, Season 8” — the kitchen serves up California cuisine with a garnish of good old-fashioned Southern flavor. Menu highlights include staples such as hearty sandwiches and burgers, classic salads and hearth-fired pizzas, along with entrées that accent both chefs’

backgrounds — from barbeque shrimp and grits and home-style meatloaf, to wild mushroom agnolotti and roasted chicken with quinoa. The well-chosen wine list emphasizes California producers. <http://lalive.com/eat/la-market-by-kerry-simon>

- **Rock’n Fish** — Quality prime beef and fresh fish highlight the menu, complemented by an extensive wine-by-the-glass list and a wide-ranging “Wine Book” featuring excellent bottle selections from all over the wine world. <http://www.rocknfishlalive.com>

- **Wolfgang Puck Bar & Grill** — Puck modernizes the traditional “bar and grill” concept with approachable fine dining in a stunning setting. Esteemed hospitality designer Tony Chi captures the essence of the relaxed California dining experience that Puck made popular with the original Spago. Chi drew inspiration from the restaurant’s neighbors, the Nokia Theatre and the Grammy Museum, interweaving musical patterns in many of the key design elements including the floors, light fixtures and wood grains. Just like its



TOURING TIPS

name, the restaurant features a contemporary “bar and grill” menu artfully executed by Chef Russ Simon. The menu features Puck’s signature comfort food that can be enjoyed either as a casual, quick-bite in the bar and lounge, or as a leisurely dining experience. And for



something different, wine-wise, check out the “Esoteric Reds” and “Esoteric Whites” on the extensive wine list.

<http://www.wolfgangpuck.com/restaurants/fine-dining/12387>

• **The Farm of Beverly Hills** — The concept is simple: use farm-fresh



ingredients to create innovative dishes. And the execution is superb, from breakfast through dinner. The restaurant’s wine list is a true delight, featuring numerous “old favorites” and a number of surprises, with many selections available by the half-bottle — perfect for a couple on a date.

<http://thefarmofbeverlyhills.com>

To work up an appetite for any of these L.A. Live dining destinations, spend some time at a nearby winery. That’s right, there’s a working winery in downtown Los Angeles, and it’s steeped in history.

Since 1917, San Antonio Winery has been the heart of winemaking and wine culture in Los Angeles. It is the last producing winery in the city, and continues to hand-craft wines from estate vineyards in Napa Valley, Monterey, Paso Robles and other viticultural areas throughout California.

At one time, more than 100 wineries could be found within the boundaries of Los Angeles. San Antonio is the last winery standing, and continues to

be owned and operated by the family that founded it — now in its fourth generation.

<http://www.sanantoniowinery.com>

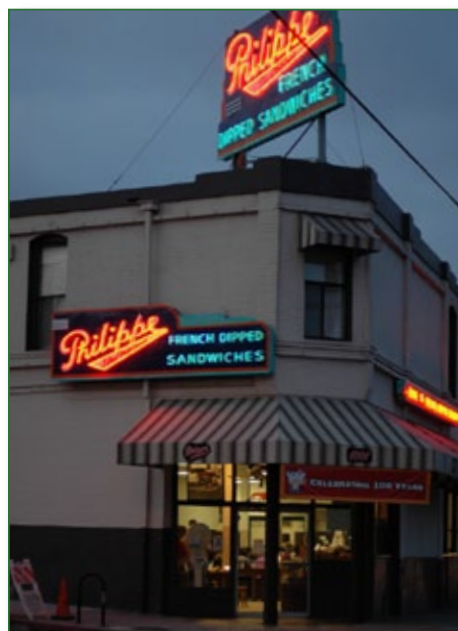
And no wine-focused trip to Los Angeles is complete without a stop at one of the city’s most historic

restaurants: Philippe the Original. It’s famous for its French-dipped sandwiches (roast beef, roast pork, leg of lamb, turkey or ham), served on a French roll that’s dipped in the natural gravy of the roasts.

One wouldn’t expect a fancy wine list at a restaurant where you

stand in line to order, and watch as your sandwich is prepared right in front of your eyes. But Philippe’s offers numerous wines by the glass, including vinous delights by Duckhorn, Sonoma-Cutrer, Groth, Merry Edwards and many more.

<http://www.philippes.com>



VINESSE

Hot LIST

1 Hot Wine Walk-around.

October is a great month to visit the mountain town of Truckee, situated along the route between northern California and Reno.

The weather typically is cool but comfortable, and the surrounding scenery can be spectacular. If that weren’t reason enough to go, consider attending the 9th annual Downtown Truckee Wine, Walk & Shop event. It’s set for Saturday, Oct. 6, tickets are priced at \$30 (in advance), and proceeds benefit the Family Resource Center of Truckee. www.TruckeeWineWalk.com

2 Hot Lisbon Bakery. Mid-morning, in tiny bakeries throughout Portugal’s historic city of Lisbon, it’s not unusual to see local workers taking a break, savoring a warm custard tart, and sipping a small glass of Port. One of the more popular bakeries is Antiga Confeitaria de Belem, which follows a 170-year-old recipe in crafting its delicious tarts.

<http://www.golisbon.com>

3 Hot Historic Winery Tour.

The end of apartheid in 1994 brought with it an added bonus for wine lovers: access to the outstanding wines of South Africa. A favorite destination for soaking in the history of the country’s wines is Klein Constantia Estate, founded in the late 17th century and which (according to legend) counted among its many fans Napoleon Bonaparte.

<http://www.kleinconstantia.com>



Kotsifali. A red wine grape grown on the Greek island of Crete. Often blended with Mandilaria.

Long. Term used to describe the finish of a wine with flavors that linger in the mouth after the wine has been swallowed.

Mandilaria. A red wine grape that's grown throughout Greece. It's typically included in blends to deepen the color.

Nose. The aroma or "bouquet" of a wine.

Ortega. A winegrape that's a cross between Muller-Thurgau and Siegerrebe. Named after Spanish poet and philosopher José Ortega y Gasset, and typically used for making sweet wines.

Phenolic Compounds. Natural compounds that are present in the skins and seeds of wine grapes.

VINESSE STYLE

SOUTH COAST WINERY RESORT & SPA

South Coast Winery in Temecula, Calif., north of San Diego, is more than a wine estate. It's a 38-acre resort that includes a spa and 76 private villas with no common walls.

The villas range in size from 575 to 1,150 square feet, and each includes a fireplace, a soothing spa tub and a peaceful terrace tucked away in the vineyard. High-speed wireless internet access is included for those who can't get completely "away," and a bottle of South Coast wine is placed in each villa to welcome guests.

The resort's Grape Seed Spa is open seven days a week, its purpose to soothe and re-energize the body, mind and soul with a blend of innovative vine-based treatments, a state-of-the-art fitness center, private movement studio and secluded places to simply unwind.

Guests can stroll tranquil paths among the vines, soak in an alfresco whirlpool, and reflect on views of Mount Palomar from the veranda — paired with a complimentary glass of wine.

Spa packages include "Full Day of Bliss," "Half-Day of Bliss," "GrapeSeed Experience" and, for couples, "Time to Breathe." Package fees range from \$235 to \$655, and the six-hour full-day



package includes South Coast's signature massage, GrapeSeed scrub, a signature facial and a 50-minute manicure and pedicure. And between treatments, lunch is served.

To learn more about South Coast Winery's stylish offerings, visit: <http://wineresort.com>

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APPELLATION SHOWCASE



In most regions of France, only a few grapes are permitted in making wine that carries the appellation's designation on the label.

Chateauneuf-du-Pape is different. There, 13 varieties are permitted to be grown and used in the winemaking, compared to just three in the northern Rhone appellation of Hermitage.

First and foremost, Chateauneuf-du-Pape is an historic town of the southern Rhone. But it's also famous for its rich, full-bodied, spicy red wines (and not so famous for its weighty, flavorful white wines, because they're made in such small quantities).

Chateauneuf-du-Pape translates to "new castle of the Pope," a reference to the fact that the town, located just north of Avignon, was selected as the new home for Pope Clement V's court early in the 14th century.

The soils of the region are pebbly and sandy, and the climate is Mediterranean and quite dry — the driest of all Rhone appellations. Even so, irrigation is forbidden during the growing season, except in extreme drought situations.

For many centuries, the appellation's wines were included with those from the Avignon area. Then in the 1920s, Baron Pierre Le Roy de Boiseaumarie of the Chateau Fortia assembled a set of

rules governing the production of Chateauneuf-du-Pape wines.

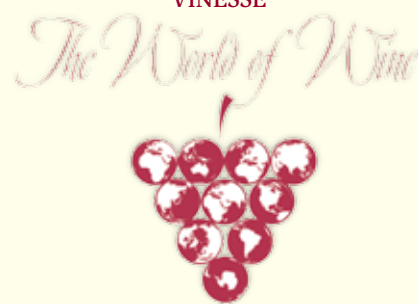
These rules proved to be a precursor of what now is the French appellation system, and made Chateauneuf-du-Pape one of the country's first official wine appellations (declared in June 1929).

Grenache is the king of Chateauneuf-du-Pape grapes and produces arguably better wine than it does in any other part of France. Syrah and Mourvedre are the next most important red varieties, and often are blended with Grenache to produce some very tasty cuvees.

Counoise is one of the lesser-known varieties to be grown in any measure, and is still used by only a few producers. The remaining red varieties — Carignan, Cinsaut, Muscardin, Vaccarese, Picpoul Noir and Terret Noir — are planted in just a few vineyards.

Bourboulenc, Clairette, Grenache Blanc and Roussanne are the grape varieties used in the production of white Chateauneuf-du-Pape wines. They are employed in a mix of ratios to produce tangy, weighty wines with deeply perfumed floral aromas.

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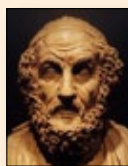


Q We're going to Miami after Labor Day — which we're hoping is after "tourist season" — and are looking for a "locals" place to have a nice dinner. Can you help?

A We can! But first, be aware that because of the balmy weather, Miami's tourist season extends well past September. The big crowds will be gone, but expect the hotels to still be at or near capacity well into October. As for a place to eat, we've been hearing great things about The Dining Room, an intimate, 12-table restaurant that features seasonal menus. You can check out the current offerings at www.diningroommiami.com/menu. The wine-by-the-glass list is pretty run of the mill, but the bottle list has a number of interesting selections, so we'd suggest taking a cab and splurging on a bottle.



“ The wine urges me on, the bewitching wine, which sets even a wise man to singing and to laughing gently and rouses him up to dance and brings forth words which were better unspoken. ”



— Homer, in *The Odyssey*

Watching your calories? Drink that glass of wine with absolutely no guilt. The calorie count in a 4-oz. glass of vino ranges from 80 to 100. The number can go up, of course, with a very sweet dessert wine. Also keep in mind that wine contains no cholesterol and is fat free.

In March, it was announced that F. Korbel & Bros. would sell one of Sonoma County's iconic wineries, Kenwood Vineyards, to Banfi Vintners. "We are thoroughly impressed at the incredible achievements of Gary Heck with Kenwood, and hope to become a worthy custodian of this historic brand," said Banfi co-CEOs James Mariani and Cristina Mariani-May in a press release at the time. "We want the transition to be as seamless as possible." But the deal ultimately was not completed, and now Kenwood is moving forward, still under the F. Korbel & Bros. banner. Kenwood is widely known for its "Artist Series" Cabernet Sauvignon.

3,985

Number of bottles of wine produced by the "average" acre of grapevines. This number, of course, varies by wine region, variety and vintner preferences. It equates with 13.5 barrels and 797 gallons of wine.

Four Chimneys Organic Winery in Himrod, N.Y., is said to be the first organic winery in North America, having produced its premiere vintage in 1980. It is located on the western shore of Seneca Lake, the deepest and widest of the Finger Lakes, on Yates County's "Hall Road Scenic Corridor," just before it descends to the peaceful lakeshore drive. The Civil War-era Victorian estate was described by *National Geographic* magazine as "the most picturesque winery in the Finger Lakes." Nothing toxic or synthetic goes into the growing of Four Chimneys' grapes or the making of its wines. Instead of many toxic pesticides, it makes sure the natural balance of predator insects is fully functioning in the vineyards. If not, hundreds of thousands of beneficial insects, such as ladybugs and lacewings, are introduced to keep the number of grape predator insects down. Instead of highly toxic synthetic fungicides, it uses natural means to combat fungus, including fine-tuned nutrition so that each vine's natural immune system has everything it needs to protect itself naturally.



FOOD & WINE PAIRINGS

Vegetables



“Eat your vegetables and drink your wine!”

Isn't that the instruction we received from our moms each night at the dinner table when we growing up? We're pretty sure it was *something* like that...

For those of us who grew up to love our veggies and to love wine, pairing the two can be challenging. This is particularly true of vegetables with assertive flavors, asparagus being a prime example. Other than a blanc de blanc sparkling wine with a basically neutral flavor, we've yet to find a wine that really complements asparagus.

Other vegetables present similar pairing challenges in varying degrees. As a general rule, your best shot at making the combination work is to opt for a wine that is tangy and fresh. That eliminates most red wines, as well as most whites that are more than three years old.

Fortunately, that still leaves us with a number of options, including youthful renditions of Chenin Blanc, Pinot Gris, Muscadet and Gruner Veltliner.

But perhaps the most versatile of all wines with veggies is Sauvignon

Blanc. It's the go-to variety to accompany salads, whether they're made exclusively from greens or have chopped veggies tossed in.

Keep in mind that when other flavors are introduced to a vegetable dish, the wine pairing parameters change. Examples include carrots that are maple glazed, corn on the cob brushed with melted butter, and green beans sprinkled with bacon bits.

All of those “condiments” fundamentally change the flavor of the dish. And when choosing a wine, we pair with the dominant flavor.

Much like with main courses — meat, fish, fowl — each of us tends to have favorite vegetables. Your best bet when it comes to identifying complementary wines for your favorite veggies is to experiment.

Half of the fun of food and wine pairing is discovering surprising successes.

P.S.: If you really prefer red wines to whites, and are now completely bummed about the veggie-pairing possibilities, there is one red that works quite nicely in many cases: Chianti Classico (made primarily from Sangiovese grapes), a red noted for its zippy acidity.

Light & Sweet

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BEEF TENDERLOIN WITH CABERNET SAUCE

Cabernet Sauvignon can be tricky to pair with food — but not if the food is topped with a Cabernet sauce. This recipe yields 8 to 10 servings.

Ingredients

- 2½-lb. beef tenderloin roast
- ¼ cup olive oil
- Salt and pepper
- 1 large onion, chopped (1 cup)
- 2 stalks celery, chopped (1 cup)
- 2 medium carrots, chopped (1 cup)
- 4 cloves garlic, thinly sliced
- 1½ cups Cabernet Sauvignon
- 1½ cups beef broth
- ½-cup balsamic vinegar
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 tablespoon butter
- ½-teaspoon fresh rosemary, snipped

Preparation

1. Arrange preheated coals around drip pan on grill for indirect cooking. Test for medium-high heat over drip pan.
2. Lightly coat beef with 2 tablespoons of the olive oil, and season with salt and pepper.
3. Insert a meat thermometer into the center, and grill indirectly on the rack of a covered grill for 1 hour, or until thermometer registers 145 degrees (for medium rare). Cover and let stand 15 minutes before slicing.
4. Meanwhile, heat the remaining 2 tablespoons of olive oil in a large saucepan over medium-high heat. Add onion, celery, carrot, and garlic, and cook and stir for about 10 minutes, or until vegetables are brown.
5. Add wine, beef broth, balsamic vinegar and bay leaves. Simmer, uncovered, for 10 minutes. Strain, reserving the liquid.
6. Discard solids and continue to boil the liquid gently, uncovered, for 25 to 30 minutes, or until reduced to ½ cup and slightly thickened.

7. Stir butter and rosemary into the sauce. Season to taste with salt and pepper.
8. Thinly slice the beef, and serve immediately with the sauce.

SPAGHETTINI WITH LEMON SAUCE

Seafood isn't your only choice when serving Sauvignon Blanc. This dish also pairs beautifully, and this recipe makes 4 to 6 servings, depending on your appetites.

Ingredients

- 1 pound dried spaghetti
- ½-cup butter (1 stick)
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped shallots or green onions (white parts only)
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped garlic
- 2 tablespoons finely grated lemon zest
- 3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- Salt and freshly ground pepper
- 3 tablespoons chopped fresh basil leaves
- 3 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley leaves
- ¾-cup freshly grated Pecorino or Parmesan cheese

Preparation

1. Bring at least 4 quarts of lightly salted water to a boil in a large pot. Stir in the spaghetti and cook until al dente. Drain, reserving a cup of the pasta cooking water.
2. While pasta is cooking, melt butter and olive oil over medium heat in a large sauté pan. Add the shallots and garlic, and sauté until the vegetables are softened (1 to 2 minutes).
3. Stir in the lemon zest and juice, and season lightly with salt and pepper. Stir in the hot spaghetti, and remove from the heat.
4. Add the herbs and cheese and toss quickly, adding enough of the reserved pasta water to keep everything moist. Serve in warm bowls.

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