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# The Grapevine

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER FOR VINESSE WINE CLUB MEMBERS

## Wining Down After a Hearst Castle Visit

Like Zinfandel?  
You Might Like...

The Science of  
Label Design

Wine Pairing  
Partners for Pork

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### OUR MISSION:

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.

### YOUR GRAPEVINE TEAM:

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**Robert Johnson**

Wine Steward:

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## EDITOR'S JOURNAL

# If You Like, You Might Like...

By Robert Johnson

*I was first exposed to the concept when I was writing the wine column for the Sonoma County Independent.*

The *Independent* was a weekly publication that would be categorized as an "alternative weekly." It was printed in a tabloid format, and was heavy on local entertainment listings, restaurant reviews and the occasional hard-hitting feature on topics such as the upcoming cannabis festival or the encroachment of civilization on the local farmland.

The writing was sharp and focused, and the newspaper gave both locals and visitors a taste of what it was like to live or be in Sonoma County. I was proud to have my byline among that group of talented writers — one of whom introduced me to the concept alluded to above.

He was the newspaper's music critic, and when reviewing an album released by a local singer or band, he'd typically accompany it with a little information box that included the record company's name and this tidbit of information: "If you like this band, you might like..."

I can't tell you how many times I took his advice, and checked out a previously unfamiliar band. Back then, before iTunes and other digital platforms that enable us to "test-drive" music before we buy it, music lovers depended on reviewers to help guide us in our purchases. My fellow *Independent* writer's "If you like, you

might like..." recommendations are, in large part, why my CD collection is so big.

It dawned on me the other day that the same approach could be taken with wine, because some wines share quite similar qualities. Each variety is unique, but each also shares aromas, flavors and/or textures with one or more other varieties — as my old music critic friend's exercise will demonstrate...

- If you like Sauvignon Blanc, you might like Torrontes or Verdejo.
- If you like rich Chardonnay, you might like Viognier.
- If you like a lighter style of Chardonnay, you might like Pinot Blanc, Pinot Gris or Pinot Grigio.
- If you like Pinot Grigio, you might like Trebbiano or Albariño.
- If you like Pinot Noir, you might like Grenache or Gamay.
- If you like Merlot, you might like Carmenere.
- If you like Cabernet Sauvignon, you might like Nero d'Avola or Cabernet Franc.
- If you like Zindandel, you might like Grenache.

When you open your mind (and your mouth) to new varieties, your enjoyment of wine is guaranteed to expand — no "might" about it.





## Every Vintage Tells a Story

**R**emember Rod Stewart's song, "Every Picture Tells a Story," from his 1971 album of the same name?

The song tells the tale of Stewart's adventures with various women around the world, with stops in Paris, Rome and Peking. Each encounter is unique, just as each woman is unique.

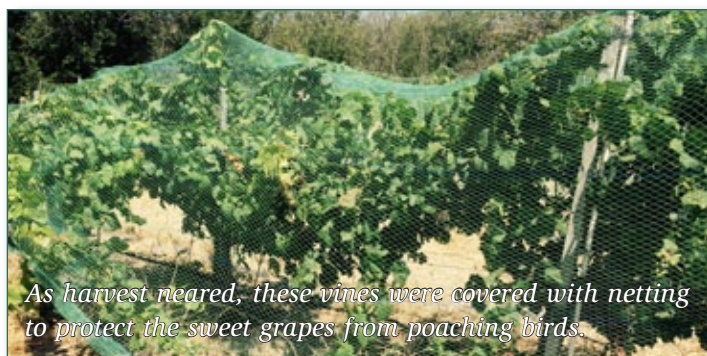
And so it is in the world of wine — you knew we were going to find a wine connection, didn't you? — and it's something we are reminded of with each new harvest season.

Milk tastes pretty much the same whether it's made in Wisconsin or California. Orange juice doesn't vary much from Florida to Brazil.

But wine is unlike any other beverage. Although large producers such as Gallo or Kendall-Jackson can normally blend to a "house style" each year, wines made by smaller estates are expressions of both time and place.

The place — that is, the vineyard — will stay basically the same from year to year, but the weather will vary, and that will impact the aromas and flavors in the grapes harvested.

Here in North America, the winegrape harvest is in full swing. In California, Chardonnay and Pinot Noir grapes earmarked for sparkling wine began to be picked in August,



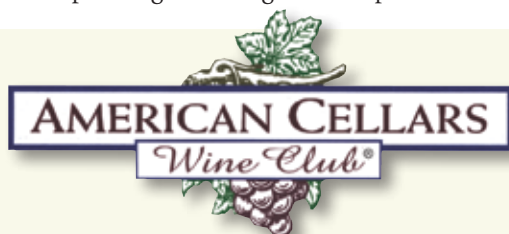
*As harvest neared, these vines were covered with netting to protect the sweet grapes from poaching birds.*

before their sugar levels started to spike. In vineyards where those and other varieties were destined for table (non-sparkling) wines, picking dates came later.

In the eastern United States, where temperatures are lower and sunny days fewer, it's common for grapes to remain on the vines well into October. Grapes destined for "late harvest" wines or "ice wines" may stay on even longer in order to intensify their sugar content.

Vintners tend to remember the wines they make by year. Each wine creates a memory, and those memories are how vintages ultimately are compared.

Because, to paraphrase Rod Stewart, "Every vintage tells a story."



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**FREQUENCY:**

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**PRICE:**

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*William Knuttel: A Career of Outstanding Bottlings*

**“W**ines of intensity and finesse.” That’s the slogan embraced by the William Knuttel winery, which somehow manages to meld those seemingly disparate qualities in its various wines.

Veteran California vintner William Knuttel has concentrated on ultra-premium winemaking for the majority of his career. His philosophy has long been to make a wide range of wines in various styles every vintage. Why? Simply because the number of vintages for any winemaker is finite; one gets only so many opportunities to craft great wines.

His wealth of experience has led directly to Knuttel’s adherence to traditional winemaking practices. This results in balanced, elegant wines that pair well with food and have excellent aging potential — the hallmarks of classic wine.

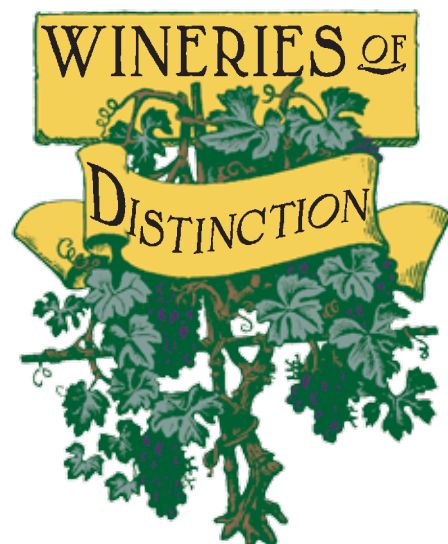
Knuttel’s winemaking journey began at Saintsbury, one of Napa Valley’s most famous estates, where he was winemaker from 1983 to 1996. There, he established that brand as an international leader in high-end Pinot Noir and Chardonnay, made in the Burgundian style. Based on Saintsbury’s success, the way those varieties were produced in California was emulated by countless fellow winemakers.

During his tenure at Saintsbury, Knuttel founded and was owner/winemaker of Tria, producing fine

Pinot Noir, Syrah and Zinfandel.

After leaving Saintsbury, Knuttel became Vice President and Winemaker at Chalk Hill Winery, one of Sonoma County’s top estates. From 1996 to 2003, he specialized in making ultra-premium Chardonnay, Cabernet Sauvignon, Sauvignon Blanc and Pinot Gris.

From 2003 to 2011, Knuttel was Executive Winemaker at Dry Creek Vineyard, where he completely re-honed the styles and quality of that winery’s extensive portfolio, working with second-generation family





members who wanted to ensure that the winery remained a family business.

In 2005, Knuttel also was the winemaker for the Zinfandel Advocates and Producers, crafting that group's Heritage Zinfandel. Further demonstrating the diversity of his skills, he also served as President of the California Cabernet Society from 1999 to 2003.

In addition to the William Knuttel wines, Knuttel now is partner and winemaker for two other brands: Ottimino, which produces Zinfandel exclusively from the Sonoma Coast, and Teira, producer of premium Sauvignon Blanc, Zinfandel and Merlot.

Wines bearing the William Knuttel label now include Pinot Noir (the 2006 "Clone 777" bottling from Sonoma County's Russian River Valley was recently featured by Vinesse's Elevant Society), Cabernet Sauvignon, Malbec, Petite Sirah and Chardonnay.

Knuttel works hand in hand with Rex Smith, a talented winemaker who was born and raised on a farm in New Zealand where, at a young age, he became interested in horticulture. Smith attended Massey University in New Zealand, earning a Bachelor of Horticultural Science degree in 1984, majoring in Viticulture and Oenology.

After graduating, he traveled to the Napa Valley to gain hands-on winemaking experience, working for Saintsbury Winery for the following three vintages. It was in the Saintsbury cellars where he discovered his passion for winemaking and met Knuttel for the first time.

Smith subsequently decided to alternate harvests between Napa Valley and the Barossa Valley in South Australia in order to gain more experience. He returned to school to earn his Graduate Diploma in Wine from Roseworthy Agricultural College in Australia before permanently moving to the Napa Valley.

Jobs at The Hess Collection, Cuvaison, Heller Estate, Durney Vineyards and Vine Cliff enabled Smith to gain extensive experience. Then, in 2012, he re-forged his relationship with Knuttel, becoming Winemaker and General Manager for the William Knuttel winery.

Today, Smith manages a crew of five as well as Knuttel's custom crush clients, and works closely with Knuttel to make a wide range of wines. Together, Knuttel and Smith make a great team, and it shows in each and every bottle they craft — wines of intensity and finesse.

## Winery 4-1-1

### William Knuttel

Tasting Available at:  
**The Tasting Room at  
 Napa Wine Company**  
 40 St. Helena Hwy.  
 Oakville, CA 94562

*Open Daily, 10 a.m.-4:30 p.m.*

# Light & Sweet

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## FREQUENCY:

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## PRICE:

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To learn more about this Club, call 800-823-5527 or visit [www.Vinesse.com](http://www.Vinesse.com)



# Wining Down After Touring Hearst Castle



*After spending several hours soaking in the views at Hearst Castle, you'll be ready for some relaxation. We have a late-day itinerary that's perfect for a wine lover.*

**A**merica doesn't have many castles. Not like Europe does. And only a few are open to the public.

That's why Hearst Castle, built by 20th century newspaper magnate William Randolph Hearst, has been attracting visitors for decades. Situated high on a bluff overlooking the Pacific Ocean south of San Francisco, the castle provides a close-up look at what money can buy. And Hearst, quite obviously, had a lot of money.

One could spend a full day at Hearst Castle, taking the various tours that, combined, provide total access to all of the estate's public areas. But we suggest enjoying a more diversified day — half a day at the castle, and the other half

indulging in nearby wine experiences.

Arrange your Hearst Castle tour in the morning, and then head south on California Highway 1. You'll pass through the town of Cambria and then, a few more miles down the road, you'll come to the town of Harmony. The two-street town was the subject of a 1979 song called "Harmonizing in Harmony Population 18," although the population today is only half that.

Begin your stay by visiting Harmony Cellars, where you can taste any six of 12 available wines for \$7. For \$3 more, you can keep the winery's logo glass.

*At Harmony Cellars, guests may select their own flights of six wines for \$7. Then if they want to keep the logo glass, it's \$3 more.*



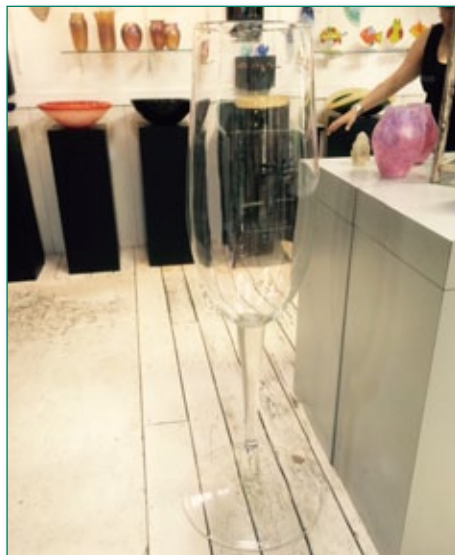
## TOURING TIPS

Next, head over to Harmony Glassworks, where you can view live demonstrations of glassmaking. Among the unique products are wine bottle toppers that include one-of-a-kind glass designs. There's also a giant wine glass that has a \$3,000 price tag, bringing new fear to the phrase, "You break it, you own it."

Continue south on California 1 to Morro Bay, where you can enjoy a leisurely meal at Stax Wine Bar. Choose from a selection of crostini, panini, meat plates and salads, and also enjoy well selected wines by the glass, bottle or flight. At five tastes for \$10, the flights are a bargain, and a great way to experience the wares of several local wineries in one sitting.

On the way in or out of Stax, be





*Harmony is home to a glass-blowing shop where wine-related items range from one-of-a-kind bottle toppers to a giant wine glass priced at \$3,000.*

sure to check out the windows, where you'll find decorated bricks depicting furry friends in a variety of wine-related poses.

A leisurely, scenic drive along Highway 41 will take you back to the 101 freeway, where you can head north toward Monterey and San Francisco, or south toward Santa Barbara and Los Angeles — having been well entertained, filled with good food and good wine, and feeling like the king or queen of a castle. ■



*The drawings of wine-loving dogs that line the windows tell you that Stax is going to be a fun place for drinking wine.*



### For Further Information

**Harmony Cellars**  
3255 Harmony Valley Rd.  
Harmony, CA 93435  
805-927-1625

**Harmony Glassworks**  
2180 Old Creamery Rd.  
Harmony, CA 93435  
805-927-4248

**Stax Wine Bar**  
1099 Embarcadero  
Morro Bay, CA 93442  
805-772-5055

# VINESSE

## Hot LIST

### 1 Hot Santa Barbara Wine Country Boutique Hotel.

Denmark is a hub of modern design, and the “Danish” community of Solvang, Calif., is home to The Landsby, a 41-room hotel featuring a clean, contemporary design influenced by a traditional Scandinavian aesthetic. The completely remodeled, bright and open guestrooms are finished with blonde woods, brushed brass accents, and elegant but comfortable hand-crafted furnishings. The Landsby’s introductory package includes two wine-tasting vouchers for two at nearby tasting rooms. <http://www.thelandsby.com>

### 2 Hot Food and Wine Event.

Ashland is best known as the home of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, but come November 6-8, it will be the Pacific Northwest’s hottest “foodie” destination. That’s when the 9th annual Ashland Culinary Festival will be held, with local restaurants, breweries and wineries combining to present a series of workshops, tours and tastings. Twelve local chefs also will compete for “Top Chef” honors. [www.ashlandchamber.com/Culinary2015](http://www.ashlandchamber.com/Culinary2015)

### 3 Hot French Café Not in Paris.

Flavor-packed sea bass tartare with citrus? Check. Equally flavorful olive oils to take home? Check. People watching adjacent to an historic square? Check. Café Maurice, situated alongside Place St. Georges in Toulouse, has it all. And to accompany that olive oil, be aware that there is an exceptional boulangerie next door. <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Café-Maurice/441799696016658>



**Quinta.** “Farm” in Portuguese, on a wine label it indicates the source of the grapes used to make the wine.

**Racking.** Process of moving wine from one vessel to another. One part can involve separating the wine from particles that settle post-fermentation, a.k.a. lees.

**Supple.** Term used to describe a wine that’s soft and velvety.

**Tannins.** Adding body and structure to wine, they are extracted from grape seeds and skins. Also can impact how long a wine can age.

**Uctuous.** Term used to describe a wine that’s rich, intense and lush.

**Veraison.** The onset of grape ripening, indicated by the softening of the berries and their changing color on the vine.

## VINESSE STYLE

### WINE LABEL DESIGN

**L**awrence Dutra still abides by the mantra he established when he founded Vinesse: “We will always be more concerned with what’s in the bottle than what’s on the bottle.”

In other words, while a pretty label may be nice, a pretty wine will always be more important.

Yet there’s no escaping the fact that label design is a critically important part of the wine business. Consider that 330 million cases of wine are sold each year in the United States, most of it in supermarkets or other retail outlets. Displayed next to dozens or even hundreds of other bottles, that means any given bottle has only a split second to catch the consumer’s attention. In such environments, labels matter... and that means label design matters.

Dry Creek Vineyard revamped the design of its Sauvignon Blanc label for the 2014 vintage. “The new package is striking,” says Director of Marketing and Communications Bill



Smart. “We have chosen to put all of the winemaking information on the front label. Our desire is to share the passion and authenticity with which this wine was made.”

Jackson Family

Wines created a new brand called Liberated, designed to appeal to millennials, and had labels designed to, as Senior Communications Manager Corinne Watson puts it, “embody the millennial spirit of challenging conventions and expressing individuality through the different personas” depicted on the labels.

The next time you stroll down the wine aisle at your local supermarket, take a moment to see which labels catch your attention. In many cases, weeks or even months could have gone into their development.

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- 4 bottles of the best finds from California
- Detailed Tasting Notes for each wine



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- Sonoma
- Santa Ynez
- Monterey
- Sacramento Delta
- Amador County
- Mendocino
- ... and More!

#### WINE COLOR MIX:

Reds, Whites, or Both — It’s Your Choice!

#### FREQUENCY:

Approximately Every Other Month

#### PRICE:

Only \$15-\$17 average per bottle plus shipping

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## APPELLATION SHOWCASE

# HUDSON RIVER, NEW YORK

**O**ne of the oldest and most historically important wine areas in America, the Hudson River region can be credited for pioneering many of the innovations that have helped the New York wine industry grow and prosper.

Nestled among the rolling Shawangunk Mountains on the west side and in picturesque Columbia, Dutchess and Westchester counties on the east side of the Hudson River, its wineries produce superb wines using Native American, French-American and European grape varieties ideally suited to the region's unique climate and soil.

Some of the country's oldest vineyards can be found in the Hudson Valley. The French Huguenots planted the first vines in New Paltz (now part of Ulster County) in 1677, a hundred years before any vines were planted in what is now California. The Huguenots discovered a unique combination of soil, climate and sun that together make for ideal grape-growing conditions. They originally planted their vines on the hillsides of the Hudson Highlands and started a tradition of grapes and wine that continues to this day.

The winemaking industry in the valley has survived through wars, revolutions, blights, bad weather and Prohibition to become one of

the most innovative and diverse areas of viniferous cultivation in the nation.

The broad expanse of the Hudson River serves a dual purpose. The flowing water helps keep the climate temperate, and the valley serves



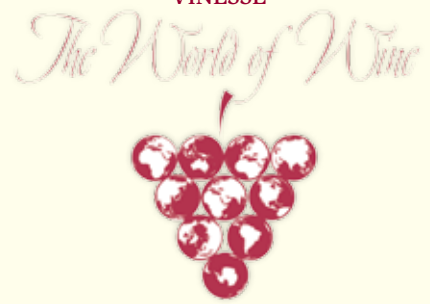
as a conduit for maritime breezes from the south. The gently sloping hills provide ideal sites for vineyards, some of which, like those owned by Benmarl Vineyards, have been planted for centuries. For many years, Benmarl was farmed by Mark Miller (shown here

in a self portrait), a true pioneer of the region.

A visit to the Hudson Valley, less than an hour and a half from New York City, offers hospitable winery tasting rooms, where you can often meet the owners and taste award-winning wines, including fruit wines.

And beyond the wineries and wine trails, the Hudson River Valley contains a wealth of natural beauty, rich with hiking and biking trails, famous historic sites, and a culinary treasure of farms and restaurants.

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### EACH SHIPMENT INCLUDES:

- 6 bottles of specially selected wines from one country or region of the wine world
- Detailed Tasting Notes for each featured wine

### WINE COLOR MIX:

Reds, Whites, or Mixed

### FREQUENCY:

6 times per year

### PRICE:

\$139.99 per shipment including shipping

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**Q** My husband and I love to dine out — I guess you could call us “aspiring foodies” — but we can’t afford to pay more for a bottle of wine than our two meals cost combined. Is it appropriate to talk to a restaurant owner about her wine list?

**A** You’re the customer, which means it’s absolutely appropriate. The conversation need not be confrontational. Simply tell the owner that you’d be much more likely to order a bottle of wine if there were some selections that were priced lower.

Restaurants are known for marking up their wines, but point out that a lower profit margin on a few bottles is better than no profit at all if you end up drinking just water instead of wine. A good restaurant operator will want to know what her customers think, and an even better one will take steps to make improvements based on customer input.

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**N**iner Wine Estates in Paso Robles, Calif., has opened a kitchen, hired chef Maegan Loring, and is now offering hands-on cooking classes. Next up: October 11 from 4 to 7 p.m., featuring New Mexican cuisine. Info: 805-239-2233.

**A**ll this month (September 1-30), 15 Paso Robles area wineries are displaying the unique paintings of Erin Hanson. There’s even an “Art & Wine Tour” that has been developed around the exhibition. To learn more, go to: <http://www.erinhanon.com>.

“Sometimes when I reflect back on all the wine I drink, I feel shame! Then I look into the glass and think about the workers in the vineyards and all of their hopes and dreams. If I didn’t drink this wine, they might be out of work, and their dreams would be shattered. Then I say to myself, ‘It is better that I drink this wine and let their dreams come true than be selfish and worry about my liver.’”



— Humorist and author Jack Handey

**\$737,000**

Cost of a package offered by Draï’s nightclub at The Cromwell in Las Vegas. The package includes use of a private 737 jet with 50 seats, a fireworks show spanning 210 seconds, and 100 bottles of Dom Perignon Champagne. (Tip not included.)

**\$5,000**

Cost of a burger and a bottle of wine at the Fleur restaurant at Mandalay Bay in Las Vegas. The Fleur Burger is made with Wagyu beef, foie gras and truffle, and is served with a bottle of 1995 Chateau Petrus. According to the restaurant, 26 were sold last year.

**T**he title is long — *Biodynamic, Organic and Natural Winemaking: Sustainable Viticulture and Viniculture* — but the content is compelling for anyone interested in what wineries and grape growers can do to have less impact on Earth. The book is lavishly illustrated, and many of those pictures are worth a thousand words in explaining various concepts and techniques. Per and Britt Karlsson are the co-authors, and the book is available on Amazon.





## FOOD & WINE PAIRINGS



### Pork

***T***he recognized world record for consumption of bacon is 182 strips eaten in five minutes by Matt Stonie.

It's doubtful Mr. Stonie had time to drink any wine while he was setting that record. But had the opportunity been available, a sparkling rosé would have been the best pairing partner.

It's impossible to name just one perfect partner for pork because pork can assume so many guises. With that in mind, here is a "cheat sheet" for the next time you have some sort of pork on your plate...

- **Ham** — Thanksgiving is just around the corner, and many people opt for ham rather than a roasted turkey for the main course. With a simply prepared ham, sparkling wine, Gamay or Beaujolais Nouveau are good choices. If you opt for a honey-glazed ham, that added sweetness expands the wine options to include off-dry (semi-sweet) renditions of Riesling or Gewurztraminer.
- **Pork Chops** — A fruit-forward Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc and Torrontes make good wine partners.
- **German-Style Dishes** — Pork sausages accompanied by acidic side dishes such as sauerkraut call for equally acidic (meaning refreshing) wines. Opt for Sauvignon Blanc or Riesling.
- **Barbecued Pork** — Most barbecue sauces are at least somewhat spicy, and when that sauce is applied to pork, the best vinous pairing partner is an off-dry white wine. Riesling or Pinot Grigio can work beautifully. Prefer red wine? Uncork a bottle of Beaujolais or Grenache.
- **Eastern-style pork dishes** — Many dishes from India, China and other Eastern countries can be extremely spicy, and that makes wine pairing a true challenge. Sparkling wine is always one pairing possibility with spicy fare, and other options include semi-sweet Gewurztraminer or Riesling. In particular, because it has its own spicy (but not hot) character, Gewurztraminer can work very well.

One culinary trend of the 2010s is the emergence of restaurants that are focused more on pork than on beef or seafood. At The Purple Pig in Chicago, for instance, topping the antipasti list are pork-fried almonds with rosemary and garlic. And among the main courses are pork osso buco with soft polenta and gremolata, and a Berkshire pork chop with fava salata and horta.

Not surprisingly, the wine list includes dozens of pork-friendly sparkling, white, red and rosé selections.

## 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.

### EACH SHIPMENT INCLUDES:

- 4 bottles of specially-selected wines
- Detailed Tasting Notes for each featured wine

### WINE COLOR MIX:

Reds, Whites, or Mixed

### FREQUENCY:

4-times per year, plus a special holiday shipment

### PRICE:

\$98.99 average per shipment including shipping

To learn more about this Club, call 800-823-5527 or visit [www.Vinesse.com](http://www.Vinesse.com)



## PORK MEATBALLS

These meatballs pair beautifully with a spicy Zinfandel, or a fruit-forward Australian Shiraz or Grenache. Skip step No. 7 below, and they pair perfectly with a rich Chardonnay. Now *that's* versatile! This recipe yields 6 servings.

### Ingredients

- 1-lb. ground pork
- 1 tablespoon onion flakes
- 3/4 cup corn flakes, crushed
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/8 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1 egg
- 1/4 cup ketchup
- 3 tablespoons brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon dry mustard

### Preparation

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees.
2. Combine pork, onion flakes, corn flakes, salt, black pepper and egg in a large bowl.
3. In a small bowl, stir together ketchup, brown sugar and dry mustard.
4. Spoon 2 tablespoons of the ketchup mixture into the pork mixture. Mix well.
5. Use vegetable cooking spray to cover a muffin tin.
6. Form 6 meatballs and place on muffin tin.
7. Coat top of each meatball with remaining ketchup mixture.
8. Cook for 30 minutes, until internal temperature reaches 160 degrees.

## MALBEC MARINATED PORK TENDERLOIN

As Malbec has grown in popularity, more and more chefs are experimenting with dishes that incorporate that wine varietal in them. This recipe yields 2 to 4 servings, depending on your appetites.

### Ingredients

- 2.5-lbs. pork tenderloin
- 1/2 cup orange juice
- 1/2 cup Malbec
- 1/2 cup soy sauce
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic
- 2 teaspoons brown sugar

### Preparation

1. In a heavy-duty, sealable bag, combine all ingredients.
2. Seal bag, pressing out all air, and place in a shallow baking dish.
3. Allow to marinate overnight — up to 24 hours — in refrigerator.
4. Grill pork for approximately 15 minutes on each side, or to desired doneness.



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