



The COLORADO WINE NEWS

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ITALY

If you want to go to Italy and you want to learn about and try as many Italian wines as possible during your visit, there is no better way to do it than to attend Vinitaly. It is a five day event held every year beginning at the end of March. It offers the chance to try over 30,000 wines in five days. This presents both an opportunity and an almost insurmountable problem. How does one choose? Yet that is a dilemma to be celebrated.

Over 4200 exhibitors which are mostly vintners but also include distributors, importers, and glassware and winery equipment manufacturers are represented. Of course, for us at **Colorado Wine News** the focus is on the wines. Our goal is to take an overview of what is available from both the well known and the lesser know producers. With luck, exploration will uncover some gems and will allow us to learn about wines which might better be skipped.

If you are interested in more than wines from every region in Italy, grappa, olive oil, and wines from many other countries also are represented. And once you have paid for entrance, it costs nothing to sample any of the offerings.

Especially notable is that attendance is not limited to members of the trade. Anyone can attend Vinitaly and English is widely spoken. This means that if you want to go to Italy you can use Vinitaly to get you there. A trip to Verona including

transportation, housing, food, and five days at Vinitaly will cost less than attendance at the Aspen Wine and Food Classic assuming you plan ahead (*well ahead* for lodging) and don't insist on top hotels and restaurants. (This is based upon actual 2007 costs.) Indeed, you will have money left over for site seeing, souvenirs, and shopping or a side trip to Milan, Venice, Florence or Rome. So if this sounds interesting, look at your calendar for the end of March 2008 and plan for some time in Italy. Buon viaggio!

A Note

Traditionally, Italian wines were made without the use of new oak. When oak was used, normally the wines were aged in large Slavonian uprights or *botti* and

those containers were used repeatedly until they were no longer serviceable. That meant a winery replaced only a small portion of its wood in any year and the wines did not show the evidence of the new oak. Thus, "traditional" Italian wines were all about the fruit, the land, the weather, and the skill of the winemaker.

More recently, there has been a move toward the use of new oak barriques, mainly French, and the character of many of the wines is changing. The new oak imparts both oak and vanilla flavors which often are quite prominent. Whether this is a good trend depends not on the technical quality of the winemaking which has been good and is improving steadily, but on whether you prefer

EDITORS' CHOICES

BEST WINES

Lisini: 01 Brunello, \$60, and Ugolaia, \$110
Mancinelli: 05 Lacrima di Morro d'Alba, \$18
I Clivi: 01 Verduzzo Friulano, \$55
Vietti: 05 Barbera, Scarrone, Vigna Vec., \$45
Selvapiana: 04 Bucerchiale, Riserva, \$29
La Stoppa: 01 Stoppa, \$37
La Torre: 01 Brunello, \$69
Clos du Val: 03 Cab. Sauv., Oak Vyd., \$62
Cantini Gini: 06 Vernaccia, \$10
Parador: 01 Gran Reserva, \$75, 03 Red Wine,

Reserva, \$55, & 04 Tempranillo, \$28
Meander: 04 Cabernet Sauvignon, \$65
Sequoia Grove: 03 Cab. Sauv., Reserve, \$55
William Cole: 03 Cabernet Sauvignon, \$125
Revana: 04 Cabernet Sauvignon, \$105
El Molino: 04 Pinot Noir, \$55
HDV: 04 Chardonnay, \$55
Woodward Graff: 03 Cabernet Sauvignon, \$37
Corison: 02 Cabernet Sauvignon, Kronos, \$98

BEST BUYS

Alice White: 06 Pinot Noir & Merlot, \$7
Malacari: 04 Rosso Conero, \$9
Vigneti Reale: 06 Vivaio Rosato, \$7
Angeline: 05 Pinot Noir & 06 Sauv. Blanc, \$14
McManis: 06 Pinot Grigio, \$10
Kendall-Jackson: 06 VR Sauv. Bl., \$11
Lolonis: nv Ladybug Red, Cuvée VI, \$13
Tapeña: 05 Garnacha and Tempranillo, \$10
Mendocino Wine Co.: 04 Big Yellow, \$11

Covey Run: 04 Cabernet Sauvignon, \$9
Kenwood: 04 Red Table Wine, \$9
Shooting Star: 06 Aligoté, \$13.50
Paraiso: 05 Riesling, \$14
Pietra Santa: 06 Rosato, \$14
Kelly's Revenge: 05 Shiraz, \$8
Martin Ray: 06 Angeline Sauv. Blanc & 05 Pinot Noir, \$14
Heron: 04 Merlot, \$12

the purer and traditional fruit flavors or the newer, more international style. At the same time, this new approach often yields wines which are immediately drinkable and will not benefit from time in the cellar. (The same thing is happening, of course, in France, in California, and elsewhere.)

Neither the new nor the traditional approach is "right." However, the use of new oak often means less distinctive wines which may better meet the requirements of the international or export or the "buy it and drink it now" market. And, of course, sometimes a wine's weaknesses can be disguised by the application of generous amounts of new oak.

Whether you prefer a traditional or new style Italian wine, it is often not possible to discern which you will get from the label. Often you can get a **hint** from whether the wine is designated DOC or DOCG which is more likely to be traditional (but be aware that the rules governing these classifications keep changing). An IGT wine or one with a designation of *vino di tavola* or table wine is probably a less distinctive wine or a new or international style which has spent time in new oak.

(Note: The prices for all European wines change continually because of exchange rate. Accordingly, you may find that some of the wines reviewed cost more than what we list.)

Trentino-Alto Adige

Viti. Von Braunbach (Settequerce-Terlano)

The **2006 Chardonnay, DOC**, Alto-Adige, \$18.50, opens with apple, pear, and toast before round flavors of apple and pear with underlying oak. The **2006 Sauvignon [Blanc], DOC**, Alto-Adige, \$23, has strong aromas of grass and herb introducing the same plus creamy apple on the palate. The **2006 Gewürztraminer, DOC**, Alto-Adige, \$25, has a grassy, herby, and creamy apple bouquet. Flavors of creamy apple, pear, and white peach finish narrow at the front and broad at the back.

The **2005 Lagrein Scuro, DOC**, Alto-Adige, \$24, has light, smooth, round, soft aromas of plum, black raspberry, and cherry which continue as flavors with a hint of oak added and finish medium-broad and medium-long. Well balanced, structured, and integrated. Very Tasty. The **2004 Cabernet Sauvignon-Lagrein, DOC**, Alto-Adige, \$34, contains 50% of each variety and has a dark, intense nose of blackberry, black cherry, currant, and plum. Smooth, soft flavors of the same are laced with nice acidity and light, fine, dry tannin.

Lagaria (Vosano)

The **2006 Pinot Grigio, IGT**, delle Venezia, \$9, opens fresh, soft, and round with sweet lemon, green apple, and a floral note. All continue as mouthfilling juicy flavors with a hint of spice which hits at the front then moves to the sides. The finish is medium-broad, truncated, and persistent. Well put together. Tasty. The **2006 Chardonnay, IGT**, delle Venezia, \$9, has soft, restrained, creamy aromas of lemon and apple before soft, round, creamy textured, lemon dominated flavors which finish long and medium-broad.

de Tarczal (Marano d'Isera)

The **2000 Pragiara, Vallagarina IGT**, \$25, is a blend of cabernet franc, cabernet sauvignon, and merlot. A bouquet of earth, smoke, chocolate, tea, currant, and blackberry continues as flat across the tongue flavors plus a hint of spice and light, dry tannin. The medium-broad, truncated finish has increasing spice. The **2003 Pianilonghi, Cabernet Sauvignon, IGT**, \$25, opens with currant, raspberry, black cherry, and smoky oak. All repeat as flavors laced with fine, light tannin and finish long and medium-broad. Medium bodied and with nice acidity, it is well balanced, structured, and integrated.

Marzemino is where de Tarczal shines and the **2005 Marzemino di Isera, DOC**, Trento Superiore, \$28, is no exception. Inviting aromas of violets, earth, smoke, barnyard, blackberry, currant, and unsweetened chocolate introduce juicy, bright, lively flavors of cher-

ry, blackberry, and black raspberry laced with light tannin before a long, medium-broad finish. Well balanced, integrated, and structured. Good.

Friuli-Venezia Giulia

I Clivi (Vicenza)

I Clivi makes highly desirable, distinctive, biodynamically produced wines. They are well worth the search to find.

The **2003 Galea, DOC**, Friuli, \$35, is a blend of 92% tokai and 8% verduzzo (which is the way the vineyard is planted). Made entirely in stainless steel with native yeast, it completed malolactic fermentation and has fresh, light, inviting aromas of pear, pineapple, honey, and forsythia. The same repeat as juicy, clean, dry flavors touched with tannin and finish medium-broad and medium-long. Well balanced, structured, and integrated. Very Good. The **1999 Galea, DOC**, Friuli, \$54, evidences that some Italian whites are quite age worthy. It has the same profile as the 2003 (or, more correctly, the 2003 resembles the 1999) but has developed a golden color and more richness while retaining balance and integration. Very Good.

The **2003 Brazan, DOC**, Friuli, \$35, is 93% tokai and 7% malvasia. Again made in stainless steel with native yeasts, it spent 2 years *sur lie*. It is very aromatic with floral, earth, petrol, and licorice before flavors of sweet lemon, green apple, lime, and sweet licorice which finish long and medium-broad. Well structured, integrated, and balanced. Very Good.

The **2001 Verduzzo Friulano, DOC**, Colli Orientali del Friuli, \$55, 160 cases, has a gold color with is natural from these thick, tannic skinned berries. It is not oxidized. Aromas of petrol, bitter almond, bitter orange, orange peel, and licorice introduce flavors of apple, licorice, orange peel, and mandarin which are intense with light tannin and a body like a light red. All carry through the long, broad finish. Unusual, well balanced, structured, and integrated. Excellent. **BEST WINE.**

Flaibani

If you want a superior Pinot Grigio look for this vintner's **2006 Pinot Grigio, IGT**, Venezia-Giulia, \$15. A proper pink-grey color, it opens with intense aromas of strawberry, lemon, and cherry which introduce big, round flavors of lemon, strawberry, and cherry laced with good acidity. The medium-broad finish is mostly at the back of the palate. Well balanced, structured, and integrated. Very Good.

Az. Agr. Borgo del Tiglio di Nicolo Manferrari (Brazzano)

Nicola Manferrari is at the opposite end of the spectrum. He is pushing the "modern" end of the envelope with the use of lots of new oak in his Chardonnays and reds and is experimenting with his blends.

The **2005 Borgo del Tiglio, DOC**, Collio, is a blend of tocai, riesling, and sauvignon blanc. Aromas of floral, apple, pear, sweet earth, and mineral introduce lean, focused, intense flavors of the same which finish medium-broad and medium-long. Well balanced, structured, and integrated. Good. The **2004 Malvasia, DOC**, Collio, opens with attractive baked apple and brown spice on the nose before rich flavors with nice sharpness of the same plus a note of lemon. The medium-broad, medium-long finish adds persistent sharp spice. Lean, focused, well put together. Good.

The **2005 Tocai Friulano, DOC**, Collio, shows earth and woody spices before mouthfilling, round red and green apple, soft lemon, and lemon peel flavors which finish long and broad. It has good body and intensity and is well integrated, structured, and balanced. Good. The **2004 Ronco della Chiesa, DOC**, Friuli, is a "selection" (a sort of reserve) of tocai friulano. It is richer, smoother, and more restrained than the regular bottling with floral, mineral, and spice aromas before crisp, clean, clear floral, lemon, spice, lemon peel, and red apple flavors laced with good acidity. The long, broad finish has persistent spice at the sides. Well bal-

anced, structured, and integrated. Very Good to Excellent.

The **2005 Chardonnay, DOC**, Collio, \$53, opens with earth, wood, and geranium on the nose. Round, creamy flavors of apple, pear, sweet lemon, and sweet wood are accented with a sweet note and underlain with nice acidity before a medium-broad, medium-long finish. Well put together. Tasty. The **2005 Chardonnay, Selezione, DOC**, Collio, \$75, has an oak dominated nose before flavors of sweet green apple, oak, and a mineral note. The apple and oak carry through the finish. If you like oaky Chardonnay, this one is a Tasty offering. The **1999 Chardonnay, Selezione, DOC**, Collio, \$75, has aged gracefully and is much the same as the 2005 but softer and subtler and finishes long and broad. Also Tasty.

The **2005 Studio di Bianco, DOC**, Collio, \$75, is a blend of tocai, sauvignon blanc, and riesling with floral and soft oak on the nose. Flavors of lemon, apple, lemon peel, spice, and floral are soft and round but with good acidity. The broad, medium-long finish has increasing spice. Well balanced, structured, and integrated. Very Tasty. Quite different is the **1999 Studio di Bianco, DOC**, Collio, \$75, which has a bouquet of petroleum, mineral, soft oak, and floral. Round, mouthfilling, and creamy with flavors of the same plus sharp spice at the sides, it finishes medium-broad, very long, and very persistent. Well integrated, balanced, and structured. Good.

Contrado Tenna is Nicola Manferrari's label for the red wines it makes with grapes from Marche. The **2003 Nero, Marche Rosso, IGT**, [Montepulciano], has aromas of smoky blackberry, black raspberry, blueberry, and a hint of oak. All continue as flavors with nice brightness and presence, somewhat dry but very fine tannin, and good acidity. The long, medium-broad finish adds persistent peppery spice. Fairly light bodied and well put together. The **2003 Sangiovese, IGT**, Marche, has a forward nose of cherry, blackberry, currant, and smoke before very round and soft flavors of the same laced with fine tannin and nice acidity. The finish is medium-long and somewhat narrow with persistent spice and dry tannin.

The **2001 Rosso della Centa, IGT**, Collio, is 100% merlot. A bouquet of white pepper, soft oak, blackberry, black raspberry, and black cherry repeats in the reverse order as flavors with the addition of light tannin and finishes medium-broad and medium-long. Well put together and boring. The **2003 Rosso, DOC**, Collio, is a blend of merlot and cabernet sauvignon. Aromas of cherry, black raspberry, white pepper, sweet smoke, and oak introduce smooth, round flavors of the same with particularly prominent pepper and the addition of light tannin before a broad, medium-long finish. It is light bodied and shows some alcohol at the end. Well put together.

The **1998 Bianco Dolce, IGT**, Venezia Giulia, has a bouquet which is not sweet of wood, celery leaf, floral honey, and peach. Rich and smooth on the palate with sweet flavors of honey, apricot, peach, a hint of oak, some tannin, and nice acidity, it finishes medium-broad and medium-long with some astringency at the top. Well put together and not cloying.

Bortoluzzi (Gradisca d'Isonzo)

Ten percent of the **2006 Pinot Grigio, IGT**, Venezia Giulia, \$18, was aged in barrique and the wine shows oak, pear, and apple on the nose. The palate adds soft lime before a long, medium-broad finish. The **2006 Sauvignon**, Venezia Giulia, \$18, is 100% sauvignon blanc. Raw oak covers everything else on the nose before intense flavors of green apple, lemon, pear, and underlying oak. The broad, truncated finish adds alcohol at the end.

These are nicely done wines if you like oaky style Italian whites.

Villa Russiz (Capriva del Friuli)

The **2006 Pinot Bianco, DOC**, Prova da Vasca, Collio, \$28, spent eleven months *sur lie*, and has clean pear and grapefruit peel aromas plus a toasty lees note. Creamy textured flavors of the same finish long and broad with an added touch

of spice. Well balanced, structured, and integrated. Tasty. The **2006 Pinot Grigio, DOC**, Prova da Vasca, Collio, \$28, also spent eleven months *sur lie* and has aromas of toast and soft, sweet apple before flavors of sweet apple, pear, sweet lemon, and lime peel. The long, medium-broad finish adds notes of spice. Well integrated, structured, and balanced. Very Tasty.

The **2006 Sauvignon, DOC**, Prova da Vasca, Collio, \$28, is a sauvignon blanc with aromas of lees, celery seed, and herb. Creamy textured with flavors of sweet lemon, herb, and celery seed, it finishes medium-long and somewhat narrow. The **2006 Tocai Friulano, DOC**, Collio, \$28, opens with dried lemon and grapefruit before fresh flavors of sweet accented grapefruit and lemon plus red and green apple which nice but are not sweet. It finishes long and broad. Well put together. Tasty.

The **2005 Chardonnay, Grafina de la Tour**, Collio, \$28, was barrel fermented and aged. Round aromas of oak over pear, apple, and lemon peel repeat as intense but light bodied flavors. The long, medium-broad finish adds spice.

Veneto



Az. Agr. Gorgo di R. Bricolo (Custoza)

The **2006 Bianco di Custoza, DOC**, Veneto, \$10, is a blend of 35% garganega, 30% cortese, 15% chardonnay, and 10% each of tocai friulano and trebbiano. A very light nose of sweet apple introduces light flavors of sweet apple and lemon plus lots of spice. The medium-broad, truncated finish is underlain with a wood note. The **2005 Bianco di Custoza, Podere San Michelin, DOC**,

Veneto, \$14, has approximately the same blend but is quite different. Aromas of herb, grass, and pear continue as flavors laced with nice acidity and a touch of tannin and finish medium-broad and medium-long. The **2006 Bianco di Custoza, Podere San Michelin, DOC**, Veneto, \$14, has the same nose and flavors but is lighter, rounder, and smoother than the 2005 release.

The **2005 Bianco di Custoza, Podere ca' Nova, DOC**, \$14, opens with apple, floral, and melon on the nose before medium-bodied, clean, fresh flavors of the same but in the reverse order and accented with a sweet note before a medium-broad, truncated finish. Well put together. Very Tasty. The **2006 Bardolino, DOC, Chiaretto**, Veneto, \$10, is a bright red rosé wine with aromas of cherry, strawberry, raspberry, and smoke. Light to medium-bodied with flavors of everything from the nose plus lots of spice but no tannin, it finishes medium-broad and truncated with persistent peppery spice. Well balanced, structured, and integrated. The **2004 Bardolino Superiore, Podere Monte Maggiore, DOCG**, Veneto, \$14, shows dark cherry, smoky oak, plum, and dried pear on the nose. All repeat as flavors with the additions of pepper and light tannin and laced with nice acidity. The medium-broad, truncated finish has persistent pepper.

The **2004 Montecroce, Rosso, IGT**, Veneto, \$14, is a blend of merlot and cabernet sauvignon. A bouquet of leather, earth, oak, dark cherry, blackberry, black raspberry, and white pepper continues onto the palate where the cherry dominates and there is good acidity and light tannin. The medium-broad, truncated finish has a tart note.

Casa Girelli

The **2005 Canaletto Pinot Noir**, Pavia I.G.T., \$10, has a nose of strawberry and black cherry before the same led by raspberry. The flavors are fresh but not sweet and finish all at the back.

Bellussi

The **nv Prosecco, Extra Dry**, Valdobbiadene, \$20, has sharp green

apple, grapefruit, and toast aromas which continue as flavors with the addition of sweet lemon-lime and finish with lingering sweetness. The **nv Bel Canto di Bellussi, Prosecco, Extra Dry**, Valdobbiadene, \$20, shows oak and light apple on the nose before slightly sweet flavors of pear and apple. Simple, one dimensional.

Bollini (Valdobbiadene)

The **2006 Pinot Grigio, DOC**, Trentino, \$15, has restrained aromas of apple, sweet grapefruit, and lemon which continue as juicy flavors and finish long and broad. Well integrated, balanced, and structured. Very Good. The **2005 Pinot Grigio, Riserva, DOC**, Friuli Grave, \$20, opens with mineral over apple before crisp, round, intense lemon, apple, and mineral flavors. It finishes medium-broad and medium-long. Well put together. Tasty.

Pieropan (Soave)

The **2006 Soave Classico, DOC**, approx. \$19, is a blend of 85% garganega and 15% trebbiano di Soave. An intense nose of floral: rose and peony, pear, and baked apple repeat as big, mouthfilling flavors which finish medium-broad and very long. Well balanced, structured, and integrated. Very Good.

The **2005 Soave Classico Superiore, Calvarino [Vineyard], DOC**, \$29, is a blend of 70% garganega and 30% trebbiano di Soave. Aromas of mineral, pear, as sweet red apple repeat as flavors with the additions of Meyer lemon and spice and finish long and medium-broad. Well put together. Very Good. The **2005 Soave Classico Superiore, La Rocca [Vineyard], DOC**, \$42, is 100% garganega from older vines and is fermented in 500-liter, mostly old, oak barrels before being transferred to 20-hectoliter barrels. It spends a total of one year in barrel before bottling and then an additional six months in bottle before release. Restrained, inviting aromas of lemon, pear, apple, and mineral introduce round, soft, clean, and juicy flavors of the same which finish medium-broad and medium-long. Well balanced, structured, and integrated. Tasty.

Le Ragose (Negrar)

The **2003 Valpolicella, Classico Superiore, DOC**, \$22, opens with good intensity cherry, plum, blackberry, and smoky oak before bright, juicy flavors of the same plus spice laced with light, fine tannin and great acidity. It finishes long and medium-broad. Well balanced, structured, and integrated and showing the ripeness of the hot 2003 vintage. Very Tasty. The **2003 Valpolicella, Le Sassini, Classico Superiore, DOC**, \$24, has soft, round, smooth aromas of smoky oak, black cherry, blackberry, and black plum plus a vegy note. It is riper on the palate than the regular release and carries everything forward as flavors which finish long and broad.

The **2003 Valpolicella, Marta Galli*, Classico Superiore, DOC**, \$24, has soft, elegant, and slightly baked aromas of blackberry, chocolate, plum, and cherry which continue as flavors laced with good, brightening acidity and light, very fine tannin. The finish is broad and very long. Well integrated, structured, and balanced. Good.

The **2003 Amarone, Classico, DOC**, \$45, has a nose of baked fruit, mostly blackberry and blueberry plus chocolate and sweet vanilla. Smooth, mouthfilling flavors of the same plus some spice and fine tannin carry through the long, very broad finish where pepper persists on the middle of the tongue with everything else at the sides and back. The wine's unusual ripeness reflects the vintage. Well put together and if you like your Amarone especially ripe, it is Very Good. The **2001 Amarone della Valpolicella, Marta Galli*, Classico, DOC**, \$50, has forward, intense but not voluptuous, inviting aromas of very ripe baked cherry, blackberry, and plum. Clean, fresh, medium-bodied flavors of the same plus fine, gripy tannin finish medium-broad and medium-long. (*Marta Galli is the vintner's mother.)

Zeni (Bardolino)

The **2006 Soave, DOC**, \$15, has bright, clean, light bodied, ripe but not sweet flavors of lemon-lime.

The **2004 Valpolicella, Classico Superiore, DOC**, \$15, opens with very

light cherry and smoky oak before clean, fresh, cherry, strawberry, cranberry, and light oak flavors. The **2005 Valpolicella, Margone, Ripasso, DOC**, \$18, has an intense, very ripe, dense nose of baked blackberry, black cherry, chocolate and smoke. All continue as flavors laced with bright acidity and granular tannin and finish long and narrow with lingering oak.

The **2003 Amarone, Classico, DOC**, \$32, was barrique aged and has very ripe aromas of chocolate, black cherry, blackberry, and plum which continue as flavors with the addition of fine, dry tannin. The **2004 Amarone, Vignale, Classico, DOC**, \$32, was made entirely in stainless steel. Baked blackberry, plum and black cherry on the nose introduce fresh cherry, blackberry, and plum flavors plus a hint of raspberry preserves and some light, fine, tannin. Very Tasty.

The **2004 Cruino, Rosso Veronese, IGT**, \$24, is 100% corvina. A nose of chocolate, blackberry, and spice leads to a bright, juicy, very peppery palate with blackberry and chocolate. The **2005 Costalago, Rosso Veronese, IGT**, \$24, shows black cherry, blackberry, light smoky oak, and vanilla on the nose. All plus pepper repeat as light bodied flavors laced with dry tannin.

The **2003 Ricioto della Valpolicella, Vignale, Classico, DOC**, \$25, has aromas of vanilla, blackberry, and black cherry before sweet and peppery flavors of the same laced with soft tannin before a long, somewhat narrow finish.

Lombardy

Az. Agr. F.lli Trevisani (Garda)

The **2006 Bali, IGT**, \$18, is a blend of 80% chardonnay and 20% sauvignon blanc. Aged in oak for five months it has aromas of herb, green apple, celery, and mint before creamy, spicy, green apple, and lemon flavors which finish long and medium-broad. Fresh, balanced, straight forward for everyday drinking.

Az. Agr. I Doria di Montalto (Oltrepo)

The **2006 Roncobiano, DOC**, \$20, is riesling with a fairly intense nose of petroleum, mineral, and grapefruit peel. All repeat as flavors laced with good acidity and a touch of fruit tannin before a medium-broad, medium-long finish which adds a peppery note. Well balanced, structured, and integrated. Tasty.

Piedmont

Tre Donne

The **2006 Roero Arneis, Piedmont**, \$17, has a floral, earth, spice, green apple, and Bosc pear nose which repeat in the reverse order as flavors with the additions of a touch of sweet lemon and a hint of tannin and laced with good acidity. It finishes long and broad. Well balanced, structured, and integrated. Very Good.

The **2003 Barbera d'Asti, DOC**, Piedmont, \$24, spent eight months in barrique, 10% new. Aromas of oak, leather, tar, blackberry, currant, cherry, charcoal, and smoke continue onto the palate with the additions of blueberry and a significant amount of fine tannin. The medium-broad, medium-long finish persists down the center. Well put together. Very Tasty.

The **2002 Barolo, DOCG**, Piedmont, \$40, was matured mostly in large Slavonian oak. It opens ripe with caramel, sweet fruit, blackberry pie, chocolate, sweet coffee, sage, and oregano. All except the chocolate continue as flavors with the additions of Maraschino cherry, leather, plenty of fine tannin and good acidity. It finishes broad and long. It is tight and unyielding now but given another ten years in the bottle it will grow and open. Very Good.

Oietti (Castiglione Falletto)

The **2006 Roero Arneis, DOCG**, Castiglione Falletto, \$20, opens with floral, mineral, spice, green apple, and lemon-lime on the nose. All repeat in

the reverse order plus light tannin and with good body, intensity, and acidity. It finishes long and broad. Well balanced, structured, and integrated. Very Good.

The **2006 Dolcetto d'Alba, Tre Vigne, DOC**, \$23, has big, super ripe, almost pie-filling like aromas of dark cherry, blackberry, and black raspberry. The same fruit continues as flavors with nice acidity and brightness and laced with dry, gripy tannin. The finish is medium-broad and truncated. Well put together. Tasty.

Vietti makes several Barberas, some blends from several vineyards and some single vineyard wines. The **2005 Barbera d'Asti, Tre Vigne, DOC**, \$18, opens big and very ripe with smoke, oak, dark cherry, plum, blackberry, and black raspberry introducing very juicy bright, medium bodied flavors of cherry, cranberry, red plum, and unripe raspberry laced with fine tannin and good acidity before a long, medium-broad finish. Well balanced, structured, and integrated. Very Tasty. The **2004 Barbera d'Asti, La Crena, DOC**, \$25, is a single vineyard wine from 75 year-old vines. Forward, inviting aromas of cherry, raspberry, blackberry, chocolate, and coffee repeat as very bright flavors plus fine, smooth tannins. Everything carries through the medium-broad, very long finish. Well integrated, structured, and balanced. Very Good.

The **2005 Barbera d'Alba, Scarrone, DOC**, \$35, is from the only barbera vineyard planted in the heart of the Barolo district. Smoky oak, chocolate, leather, and very ripe dark fruit: cherry, blackberry, and plum introduce almost tart edged, lean flavors of the same with good body and fine tannin. The finish is oddly light in front with a hard, shallow character but proceeds to give a big hit at the back. Well put together, it will benefit from another three years or so in the bottle. Good. The **2005 Barbera d'Alba, Scarrone Vigna Vecchia, DOC**, \$45, 300 cases, is from the same vineyard as the previous wine but from selected old vines. An intense nose of chocolate, black raspberry, blackberry, and smoky oak repeat as very bright flavors with the fruit first and laced with juicy acidity and very fine tannin.

Everything carries through the very broad, very long finish. Lighter bodied than the previous wine, it is well balanced, structured, and integrated. Excellent. **BEST WINE**.

The **2003 Barolo, Castiglione, DOCG**, \$30, has super ripe, almost prune aromas of plum, blackberry, chocolate, black cherry and smoke. Creamy textured flavors of the same fruit but in the reverse order and without the prune character plus light oak are laced with nice acidity and loads of tannin before a long, somewhat narrow finish. Give it a couple of years to knock down the tannin. Tasty. The **2003 Barolo, Brunate, DOCG**, \$30, opens ripe with dark cherry, currant, blackberry, and chocolate. Everything repeats on the palate with the additions of lots of spice and light tannin and finishes medium-broad and medium-long with some alcohol showing at the end. The fruit is nice but the wine is curiously light bodied when the palate is compared with the nose. Well balanced, structured, and integrated.

The **2003 Barolo, Rocche, DOCG**, \$30, shows smoky oak, blackberry, cherry, plum, chocolate, and dark roast coffee before flavors of the same with the fruit first and some light but very dry tannin. The medium-broad, long finish adds lots of pepper. It is well balanced, structured and integrated but needs at least five years to begin to show well. Very Good. The **2003 Barolo, Lazzarito, DOCG**, \$30, is still tight with black raspberry, blackberry, and black cherry on the nose before medium-bodied, mouthfilling flavors of the same plus pepper and very fine tannin. The finish is medium-broad and medium-long with pepper at the back. The wine is juicy and almost lean with nice acidity and light intensity. It is well balanced, structured, and integrated but needs at least three years to develop and open. Very Good.

The **2004 Barbaresco, Masseria, DOCG**, Piedmont, \$60, opens with cherry, smoky oak, raspberry, a meaty note, and light vanilla. Round, mouth-filling flavors of juicy, bright fruit from the nose plus strawberry and cranberry are laced with good acidity and lots of firm, somewhat dry tannin. The finish is medium-long and somewhat narrow.

The wine needs at least another five years to develop, gain more weight and richness, and open. Well balanced, structured, and integrated. Good.

(An interesting, curious note: All the Vietti reds, except the Barbaresco (at 14%), and no matter what vintage have exactly the same alcohol content: 14.5%.)

Marcarini (La Morra)

The **2003 Barolo, La Serra [Vineyard], DOCG**, \$59, spent two years in Slavonian oak and opens with soft oak, tar, earth, black cherry, floral, and an edgy note. Everything continues onto the palate where the flavors are laced with juicy acidity and lots of tannin. It probably needs another five years in the bottle to develop and begin to show well. Tasty.

Cascina Bongiovanni (Castiglione Falletto)

The **2003 Barolo, DOCG**, \$59, is aged in French oak, 50% new, for 18 months and then in larger oak barrels. International in style it has aromas of violets and roses, oak, tar, cherry, currant, black raspberry and smoke. Flavors of cherry, currant, black raspberry, smoke, and oak are laced with fine tannin and good acidity and finish medium-broad and medium-long. Well balanced, structured, and integrated. Tasty.

Poderi Colla (Alba)

The **2003 Barolo, Dardi Le Rose, DOCG**, Monforte D'Alba, \$71, opens with a curious sour note followed by rose, cherry, and smoke. Round on the palate with smoke infused flavors of cherry, cranberry, and black raspberry laced with firm acidity and fine tannin, it finishes medium-broad and medium-long. It will be better with another three years in the bottle.

Emilia-Romanga

Lini (Reggiano)

Lini produces fine Lambrusco. This is not the cheap, sweet, fizzy, soda pop like wine with which you may be familiar. Rather, these are dry, structured, and bargain priced wines. If you are not familiar with Lambrusco of this type or with Lini, these wines will be a revelation.

The **nv Corrigia Cerasa, Lambrusco Rosato Secco, DOC**, \$15, opens with cranberry and dried strawberry on the nose before somewhat tart flavors of the same plus Montmorency cherry. Everything continues through the medium-broad, truncated finish. This is a light and bright red colored rosé which will serve well as an aperitif or a wine for summer afternoons or picnics. Well balanced, structured, and integrated. Good. In contrast, the **nv Corrigia Ruberrimum, Lambrusco, DOC**, \$15, is dark red with rich, dark cherry, currant, and dark coffee aromas. The same repeat as flavors with the additions of cranberry and an intriguing grapy note almost like the skin of a Concord grape. It finishes long and medium-broad. The wine is bright, has lively fizz, some tannin, and good acidity. Well integrated, structured, and balanced. Good.

Az Viti La Stoppa di Elena Pantaleone (Rivergaro)

For a truly unusual and very attractive white, grab a bottle of the **2004 Ageno, IGT**, \$26, which is a blend of malvasia di candia aromatico, ortugo, and trebbiano. It saw no oak but spent 30 days on the skins and has a butterscotch color. A floral, clove, and cinnamon nose continues onto the palate which adds grapefruit, lemon, green apple, and some tannin before a medium-broad, medium-long finish. Well put together. Very Tasty.

The **2005 Gutturnio, IGT**, Colli Piacentini, \$18, has juicy, fresh aromas of black cherry, blackberry, and chocolate. Bright, slightly tart flavors of

cherry, raspberry, and red currant are laced with light, fine tannin and juicy acidity and finish long and medium-broad. Well balanced, structured, and integrated. Good. The **2000 Macchiona, IGT**, Emilia, \$22, is a blend of barbera and bonarda. An inviting bouquet of floral, smooth cherry, black raspberry, herb, and earth repeats as flavors with the addition of spice at the front and well integrated, supple tannin. The finish is medium-broad and medium-long. Well integrated, structured, and balanced. Very Good.

The **2003 Stoppa, DOC**, Colli Piacentini, \$37, is cabernet sauvignon. A very ripe nose of blackberry, black cherry, vanilla, smoke, chocolate, and blueberry continues onto the palate which is intense and has a nice sweet edge, grippy tannin, and good acidity. Everything carries through the medium-broad, medium-long finish. Well balanced, structured, and integrated, the unusual ripeness clearly reflects the hot 2003 vintage and will make it especially appealing to lovers of New World Cabernet. It will improve with another three years in the bottle to develop and soften the tannin. Good. More traditional in style and structure is the **2001 Stoppa, DOC**, Colli Piacentini, \$37, which has bouquet of earth, barnyard, smoke, dark cherry, blueberry, blackberry, leather, and oak. All repeat as flavors with the addition of white pepper and laced with fine, smooth tannin and good acidity before a long, medium-broad finish. Elegant and with great structure and good balance and integration, it still needs another three years to develop, open, and show at its best. This is a Very Good to Excellent Italian Cabernet rather than an excellently made Cabernet which just happens to come from Italy. **BEST WINE**.

Villa Bellaria

This is a new, cooperative venture between Elena Pentaleoni and Sandra and Nanni Fodini. The **2004 Ipadri, Rosso, IGT**, is merlot. Big, ripe aromas of smoky oak, black cherry, black raspberry, blackberry, and vanilla introduce round, smooth, almost sweet flavors of the same laced with bright acidity and a

moderate amount of firm tannin. The medium-broad, truncated finish adds persistent pepper. A New World style Merlot with bright acidity which will make it pair well with food.

Tuscany

(Notes on the 2002 Brunello will appear in the next issue.)

Lisini (Montalcino)

Lisini did not release a 2002 Brunello. Its current releases are from the 2001 vintage.

The **2001 Brunello di Montalcino, DOCG**, \$60, has a big, dark bouquet of ripe cherry, blackberry, raspberry, currant, juniper berry, cedar, and earth introducing zippy, lively flavors of the same plus plenty of smooth tannin. Everything carries through the broad, very long finish. This wine shows exceptional balance, structure, and integration is easy to drink now but will need at least five years to develop and open and ten would be better. Excellent. **BEST WINE**. As good as the regular release is, the **2001 Brunello di Montalcino, Ugolaia, DOCG**, \$110, is even better. An elegant, brooding, intense bouquet of deep, dark fruit: cherry, blackberry, unsweetened chocolate, sweet coffee, and leather continues onto the palate laced with very fine tannin and round acidity and continues to the end of the broad, exceptionally long finish. Exquisitely balanced and integrated. Delicious now, it needs another ten years in the bottle to develop and begin to show at its best and should easily hold for twenty years. Excellent to Outstanding. **BEST WINE**.

The **2005 San Biagio, Rosso Toscano, IGT**, \$30, has nice, forward cherry, sweet smoke, strawberry, and cranberry aromas. Bright and juicy cherry dominated flavors are accented with notes of strawberry and cranberry laced with very fine tannin and good acidity and finish medium-broad and medium-long with pepper notes. Well balanced, structured, and integrated. Very Tasty. The **2005 Rosso di Montalcino, DOC**, \$34, is made entirely from sangiovese grosso but spends only six months in oak and three in the bottle before release. Aromas

Shooting Star

The **2006 Riesling**, Lake County, \$14, 800 cases, has aromas of grapefruit and grapefruit peel before zippy sweet pink grapefruit flavors which finish long and quite narrow. A simple quaffer. The **2006 Aligoté**, Washington, \$13.50, was barrel fermented in older oak and has a light, fresh, floral bouquet which introduces crisp, spicy, and nicely bright flavors of lime-lemon and a hint of orange all accented with a sweet note. Everything carries through the long, medium-broad finish. Well balanced, structured, and integrated. Tasty. **BEST BUY.**

The **2003 Sparkling Syrah**, Lake County, \$16, 600 cases, has a nose of black raspberry jam, very sweet coffee, and cassis. Flavors of black raspberry, coffee, and cassis are laced with light tannin and finish long and medium-broad. Well put together. It will be very popular.

Lozonis

The **2005 Fumé Blanc**, Redwood Valley, \$14, is peppermint hard candy from nose through the broad, long finish. Simple and popularly styled. The **nv Ladybug White, Old Vines Cuvée II**, Mendocino, \$13, is a blend of French colombard, semillon, chenin blanc, and chardonnay. A floral and wood nose introduces flavors of wood, lemon, and apple which are thick and heavy but not rich before a long, somewhat narrow finish.

The **nv Ladybug Red, Cuvée VI**, Redwood Valley, \$13, is a blend of zinfandel, carignane, merlot, and cabernet sauvignon. It opens very smoky with caramel, baked blackberry, and black cherry before round, smooth, soft flavors of blackberry, cherry, and raspberry laced with nice acidity and fine tannin before a medium-broad, medium-long finish. Well balanced, structured, and integrated. Tasty. **BEST BUY.**

The **2004 Merlot**, Redwood Valley, \$18, has a bright nose of juicy cherry, raspberry, and red currant before restrained, light flavors of the same plus plenty of tannin. All finish at the back of the palate. The **2004 Cabernet**

Sauvignon, Redwood Valley, \$20, has aromas of blackberry, smoke, vanilla, black cherry, and a floral which continue as flavors laced with very dry, tooth-coating tannin.

Mendocino Wine Co.



The **2004 Tusk 'N Red**, Mendocino County, \$12, is a blend of 45% syrah, 25% zinfandel, 13% sangiovese, 11% petite sirah, and 6% grenache. It opens with light roast Columbian coffee bean, floral, cherry and red currant before light bodied flavors dominated by cherry and currant with some dry tannin. It finishes on the back one-half of the palate with coffee toffee at the very back. The **2004 Big Yellow, Cabernet Sauvignon**, Mendocino County, \$11, was aged in French and American oak and has aromas of sweet smoky oak, currant, blackberry, cherry, and chocolate covered plum introduce bright, juicy flavors of currant, blackberry, cherry, and smoky oak laced with light tannin. The medium-broad, truncated finish shows some alcohol at the back. Well put together. **BEST BUY.**

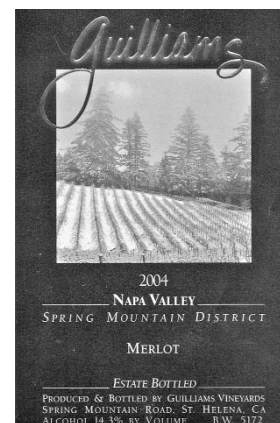
Napa Valley

Cain Vineyard & Winery

For winemaker Christopher Howell wine is a complement to food and not a substitute for it. This philosophy is reflected in the Cain wines. The **Cain Cuvée, NV4**, Napa Valley, \$32, is a blend of 45% merlot, 39% cabernet sauvignon, 14% cabernet franc, and 2% petit verdot. Sixty-six percent is from the 2004 vintage and 34% is from 2003 and the wine was aged for about 20 months in French oak, 75% new. Inviting aromas of oak, tar, earth, blackberry, black raspberry, toffee, and cherry introduce bright, medium bodied flavors of the same (except no toffee) in the reverse order and with a hint of cherry candy and a smoky note. The medium-long, medium-broad finish has nice per-

sistence. It will go especially nicely with a wide range of foods because of its weight and good acidity. Very Tasty.

The **2003 Cain Concept, The Benchland**, Napa Valley, \$54, was aged the same way but is 75% cabernet sauvignon, 10% cabernet franc, 9% petit verdot, and 6% merlot. Softer and broader than the Cuvée, it opens intense and dark with inviting fruit: blackberry, black cherry, currant, and plum plus soft, smoky oak. All repeat as flavors which flow softly across the palate and are laced with good tannin and nice, moderate acidity before a long, medium-broad finish with lingering dark fruit and smoke. Well balanced, structured, and integrated. Good. The **2003 Cain Five**, Napa Valley, \$110, is a blend of 45% cabernet sauvignon, 20% petit verdot, 19% merlot, 15% cabernet franc, and 1% malbec. A nose of herb, caramel, currant, blackberry, black cherry, smoke, earth, and a hint of cassis is reminiscent of a Bordeaux but with the ripeness of California fruit. Everything continues as flavors with the fruit first and the additions of nice round, smooth tannin and good acidity. The medium-broad, medium-long, persistent finish adds spice. It drinks nicely now but is made to age well and develop further and should do so for a decade. Well integrated, structured, and balanced. Very Good to Excellent.



Guilliams

Guilliams is a small, family operated winery on Spring Mountain producing very desirable wines. If you can't find them locally, contact the winery, it will ship: tel. 707.963.9059.

The **2003 Merlot**, Spring Mountain

District, \$37.50, opens with bright cherry and raspberry plus hints of smoky oak. Flavors of cherry, blackberry, and raspberry are laced with nice acidity and light, fine tannin and finish broad and medium-long with the addition of spice at the sides. Medium bodied, well balanced, structured, and integrated. Very Tasty. The **2003 Cabernet Sauvignon**, Spring Mountain District, \$40, has aromas of currant, black cherry, blackberry, boysenberry, sweet tar, and smoky oak. All repeat as flavors with nicely integrated fine tannin and good acidity. The long, medium-broad finish adds spice. The wine has good intensity and depth, is medium-bodied and will be even better if you give it a couple more years in the bottle to develop. Well structured, integrated, and balanced. Good.

Charbay

Just up the hill from Guilliams is Charbay. It began as a winery but may now be better known for its excellent and often unusual distillates. Everything it makes is worth trying.

The **2003 Cabernet Sauvignon**, Oakville, Napa Valley, \$75, has a nose of chocolate, licorice, stewed blackberry, black raspberry, a hint of vanilla, and smoky oak. All continue onto the palate where the blackberry loses its stewed character and fine tannin and good acidity are added. The medium-broad, medium-long finish adds spice down the middle and the spice is persistent. Well put together. Quite Nice. The **2005 Cabernet Sauvignon**, Stags Leap District, \$75 upon release in September, \$60 now as futures, 500 cases plus 200 cases of magnums, opens intense with dark berry: blackberry, blueberry, and cherry most prominent plus a touch of vanilla, nice sweet oak, and an herbal note. Juicy, bright flavors of the same are medium bodied and laced with very fine tannin. The finish is medium-broad and truncated but should lengthen by the time the wine is released and it will improve with more time in the bottle. Well balanced, structured, and integrated. Tasty.

If one of the reasons you drink red wine is for its health benefits from its antioxidants, another way to get those is

Charbay's Pomegranate Vodka, \$36. Concentrated aromas of vanilla then pomegranate peel and fruit introduce smooth, creamy textured, very clean flavors of the same which finish long and medium-broad. The pomegranate was picked at almost 20° brix and the ripeness shows. Mixed with a splash of soda this would make a perfect drink for an afternoon on the deck or by the pool. Another unusual offering is the **Green Tea Vodka**, \$36, which has soft aromas of jasmine green tea before flavors of the same with a sweet note from the two percent of added sugar which balances the natural tannins from the tea. It finishes medium-broad and medium-long. A different way to enjoy your Jasmine tea.

The stop at Charbay also presented the opportunity to taste a very intriguing, delightful, and "dangerous" offering: the **Poleko Gold Beer** from Anderson Valley Brewery. It is perfectly clear with grass and caramelized malt on the nose before flavors of the same with the addition of spice. It finishes nicely. Very clean but at 152.6 proof it demands moderation.

Parador Cellars

Owner and winemaker Steve Ventrello makes what are arguably the best tempranillo and tempranillo blends produced in California. Not only are the wines true to the varietal but they blend European style with California fruit to produce wines of depth, character, and interest. All of them are worth a special trip to find and, as a bonus, they are very moderately priced for the quality they provide.

The **2004 Tempranillo, Rancho Chimiles Vineyard**, Napa Valley, \$28, 120 cases, has a big, forward nose of black cherry, blackberry, blueberry, and caramel. Everything carries onto the palate which has big, forward, mouthfilling flavors laced with great acidity and fine, firm tannin. It finishes medium-broad, very long and clean with the addition of spice down the center. Well balanced, structured, and integrated. Excellent. **BEST WINE**. A barrel sample of the **2006 Tempranillo, Rancho Chimiles Vineyard**, Napa Valley, shows cranberry, cherry, and blueberry before

juicy, very broad flavors of the same with nice tannin and good, soft acidity before a very broad, very long finish. The **2005 Tempranillo, Rancho Chimiles Vineyard**, Napa Valley, will be bottled in August and released next February. Very inviting aromas of strawberry, cherry, and cranberry repeat with the addition of sweet cherry as lean, well structured flavors with good acidity and very fine, light tannin. It has a long, medium-broad finish and is lighter and not as ripe or rich as either the 2006 or 2004 wines. Still, it has the structure and balance to develop more weight and richness with time in the bottle. Well balanced, structured, and integrated. Good to Very Good.

The **2003 Red Wine**, Napa Valley, \$45, 250 cases, is a blend of 65% cabernet sauvignon and 35% tempranillo. It spent about 22 months in French oak, 35% new, and has aromas of chocolate, blackberry, raspberry, currant, and light, sweet, smoky oak which introduce round, ripe, juicy flavors of the same plus white pepper at the side and fine tannin before a long, medium-broad, persistent finish. Elegantly styled, well balanced, structured, and integrated. Very Good. (The 2004 Red Wine will be released in mid-September. Look for it.) A barrel sample of the **2006 Red Wine**, Napa Valley, 55% cabernet sauvignon and 45% tempranillo, opens with smoky black cherry, blackberry, currant, raspberry, and anise. The palate adds an herbal hint and everything finishes medium-broad and medium-long. Overall the wine is clean, fresh, round, smooth, supple, and elegant. Well put together. The **2005 Red Wine**, Napa Valley, is 57% cabernet sauvignon and 43% tempranillo. A nose of black cherry, blackberry, currant, raspberry, and black olive repeats as medium bodied, clean, smooth flavors with the olive green and fine, dry tannin. The finish is long and broad. Well put together. Good.

The **2003 Red Wine, Reserva**, Napa Valley, \$55, 150 cases, is a blend of 75% tempranillo and 25% cabernet sauvignon. Aged for 36 months in almost all old barrels, it opens with partially dried cherry, caramel, blueberry, cranberry, and a touch of strawberry

before round, soft, mouthfilling flavors of the same laced with good acidity and smooth tannin. The long, broad finish adds boysenberry plus pepper on the front half of the palate. Medium bodied, well integrated, structured, and balanced, it needs another year or so in the bottle to develop, open, and show at its best. Excellent. **BEST WINE.** The **2004 Red Wine, Reserva**, Napa Valley, will be released in September 2008 after spending 36 months in puncheons and one year in the bottle. It has very inviting, almost sweet toned aromas of violets, raspberry, cherry, cassis, and oregano. All repeat as almost tart but ripe flavors laced with very fine tannin and finish long and medium-broad. The **2005 Red Wine, Reserva**, is 53% cabernet sauvignon and 47% tempranillo and also will have spent 36 months in puncheons and one year in the bottle before release. A big, ripe, intense nose of blackberry, black cherry, raspberry, and currant introduces very clean, fresh, bright flavors of the same with very fine tannin and good acidity. The finish is long and broad with the addition of nice, increasing intensity spice. Elegant, well structured, balanced, and integrated. Very Good to Excellent.

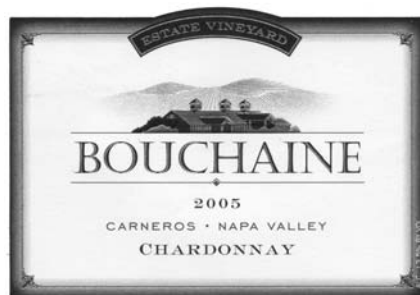
The **2001 Gran Reserva**, Napa Valley, \$75, 150 six packs, is a blend of 60% cabernet sauvignon, 25% sangiovese, and 15% tempranillo which was aged in new French oak puncheons. A bouquet of mocha, sweet blackberry, black cherry, and currant is dense but not heavy. The palate is round, almost thick, ripe, rich, and spicy and with everything from the bouquet repeated and carried to the end of the broad, very long finish. This is a powerful wine without being overpowering, over-driven or overdone and which cloaks its intensity in velvet. Well balanced, structured, and integrated. Excellent. **BEST WINE.**

Raymond

The **2006 Sauvignon Blanc, Reserve**, Napa Valley, \$14, opens with crenshaw melon, sweet grass, and sweet lime introducing a palate with an almost creamy initial impression of semisweet lime, melon, and grass plus a touch of spice and nice acidity. It finishes long and medium-broad. It has good body

and is well integrated, structured, and balanced. Good. The **2005 Chardonnay, Reserve**, Napa Valley, \$10, has aromas of linen, sweet milk, and soft, sweet apple all accented with a sweet note. Flavors of sweet apple, sweet milk, and sweet lemon are relaxed and finish long and medium-broad with a touch of astringency. Well balanced, structured, and integrated.

The **2003 Cabernet Sauvignon, Generations**, Napa Valley, \$80, has a big, ripe, round nose of chocolate covered cherry, blackberry, and smoky oak before very nicely put together, medium bodied, nicely bright flavors of the same are laced with light, fine tannin and soft acidity. Everything carries through the medium-broad, medium-long finish. Well balanced, structured, and integrated. Very Tasty.



Bouchaine

The **2005 Chardonnay, Estate**, Carneros, \$30, contains 5% muscat, was barrel fermented and aged for nine months in French oak, 20% new, and shows oak and baked apple on the nose before flavors of apple, lemon, and mineral. All continue through the long, broad finish. Straight-forward and well put together. The **2005 Pinot Noir**, Carneros, \$30, opens with smoke, earth, blackberry, black raspberry, and black cherry which repeat as flavors with a sour edge and light tannin and finish long and medium-broad.

Chateau Chevalier

Chateau Chevalier last released wines in the 1970s and 1980s before being sold and going dormant. Sold again to the owners of Spring Mountain Vineyard, it is now producing wines made to be con-

sumed young. The label shows what was the weather vane on top of the Chateau but which now rests in a corner of the dining room at Spring Mountain--complete with a bullet hole.

The **2005 Sauvignon Blanc**, Spring Mountain, \$24, opens with cotton candy and toast before a soft and zingy palate with notes of toast. The **2003 Cabernet Sauvignon**, Spring Mountain, \$29, was aged for 22 months in French oak and has a big nose of dark chocolate, wild plum, blueberry, and smoky oak before big, mouthfilling, very broad and juicy flavors of chocolate, coffee, wild plum, blueberry, and smoky oak. It finishes long and medium-broad. Overall, the wine is zippy and bright, fairly light bodied, and well balanced, structured, and integrated. It gets an extra push from its alcohol and is a very good value for a Napa Cabernet.

Spring Mountain Vineyard

The **2005 Sauvignon Blanc**, Napa Valley, \$32, 759 cases, was aged for eight months in neutral oak and has aromas of grass, herb, cat piss, and a soft, creamy note. Soft, round, and creamy on the palate, it has lots of texture.

The **2003 Cabernet Sauvignon**, Napa Valley, \$50, contains 20% merlot and 4% petit verdot and spent 22 months in French oak, 50% new. It has a soft, very inviting, almost Bordeaux-like nose of earth, game, sweat, blueberry, blackberry, licorice, and dark roast coffee. All repeat as flavors with the additions of toffee, moderate tannin, and good acidity. Everything carries through the broad, medium-long finish. Well balanced, structured, and integrated. Good. The **2004 Syrah**, Napa Valley, \$50, 495 cases, was matured in French oak, 50% new, for 18 months. It opens with baked blueberry accented at the sides with carnauba wax. Flavors of blueberry, black raspberry, black cherry, and blackberry are laced with firm, round, fine tannin and finish medium-broad and medium-long. Well put together.

Recipe

Here is a lovely, easy, prepare ahead recipe for a first course or picnic. The recipes are from Giovannella Stianti Mascheroni of Castello di Volpaia. Serve it with a Chianti Classico.

Panzanella

Serves 6

Preparation time 30 minutes plus about 2 hours in the refrigerator.

- 2 lbs. hard country bread (about 2 days old)
- 10 Crisp lettuce leaves torn into large pieces
- 6 tomatoes, medium size, cut into large cubes
- 1 cucumber, large, peeled and sliced
- 1 red onion, large, very thinly sliced
- 10 basil leaves, roughly torn
- 6 Tb. extra virgin olive oil
- 2 Tb. aromatic vinegar
- salt and pepper to taste

Cut the bread into thick slices and soak in cood water for 5 to 10 minutes, depending on how hard it is. It should soften but not disintegrate. Drain the bread in a colander and squeeze each slice separately to remove excess moisture. Transfer to a large salad bowl. Wash the lettuce leaves, spin dry and slice into narrow strips.

In a small bowl combine the olive oil and vinegar with the seasoning. Stir well to blend.

Add the cucumber, tomatoes, onion, lettuce and basil to the bowl. Sprinkle with the dressing and toss well but gently. Transfer the bowl to refrigerator and allow to marinate for at least two hours before serving. Serve cold.

Wine is as good as life to a man ... for it was made to make men glad.

Ecclesiastes, 31:27

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Tel: (303) 320-0775, Fax: (303) 394-3807, www.coloradowinenews.com
Harold J. Baer, Jr., Managing Editor; William C. Norris, Features Editor

The Colorado Wine News
2280 Clermont Street
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info@coloradowinenews.com

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