THE WINE GUY

Supply of value-priced wines will see us through wi

RICH MAURO
Gazette wine columnist

Now that the holidays are over and we are settling in for the rest of winter, I figure it is time to start thinking about which wines to buy to get us through to the spring.

In this column I identify domestic wines that are priced for everyday drinking. In my next column, I'll cover imported wines.

2002 Five Rivers Cabernet Sauvignon Paso Robles ($10). This wine, from the folks who bring us Fetzer and Bonterra wines, is classic Paso Robles cabernet at a great price. Tobacco and slightly jammy blackberry is followed by a creamy oak note in the nose; then nice plum and dark berry fruit lead into solid tannins in the mouth.

2002 Cellar No. 8 Cabernet Sauvignon California ($10). This value-oriented brand comes from Asti winery in Geyserville in northern Sonoma County, a facility with a 125-year history. It provides a lot of character — black fruits, creamy oak, tobacco and lush tannin — for the money.

2003 Hayman & Hill Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve Selection ($14). Australian David Hayman (Hardy's winemaker) and Californian Dennis Hill (Blackstone's winemaker) have collaborated to turn out a wine that has the character of a wine twice its price.

It benefits from small doses of cabernet franc and merlot and delivers black fruits and chocolate in a big but plush frame.

2003 Concannon Limited Release Central Coast "Stampmaker's Red" ($14) and **"Stampmaker's White"** ($15). Here is more justification for my growing preference for blended wines. The red is 76 percent syrah but also has grenache, cunoise, mourvedre and cinsualt. It is a bit rustic and tannic but it all comes together nicely with anise, mixed berries and a little cocoa powder.

The white is 78 percent viognier, but that is balanced with roussanne and chardonnay. It has a rich, oily texture and loads of peach, apricot and citrus fruits.

2003 J. Lohr Estates "South Ridge" Syrah ($15). Even thought this wine is labeled "Syrah," it is buttressed with 23 percent petite sirah. Together, these grapes result in ripe red berry, oak and spice aromas, fresh acids, and mixed berries and black pepper flavors. Another in a string of good values from this Paso Robles pioneer.

2004 Desert Wind Semillon Desert Wind Vineyard ($15). This Washington winery has major holdings in the up-and-coming Wahluke Slope area of the Columbia Valley, from which they produce a variety of premium wines under the Duck Pond and Desert Wind labels. I especially like this 100 percent Semillon for its qualities of citrus, nut, caramel and cream.

2003 Clos du Bois Shiraz Sonoma County ($15). One of Sonoma's best-known wineries has produced a textbook, contemporary Shiraz emphasizing pure fruit (mostly blackberry), with a little smoke, some black pepper and a velvety texture.

2004 TAZ Pinot Gris Santa Barbara ($15). Taz Vineyards is a special project of Bob "the Tasmanian Devil" Steinhauer, the longtime Beringer vineyard manager. The winery uses fruit from the Santa Rita Hills to produce pinot noir and this nutty, creamy, tropical fruit-dominated wine.

Sokol Blosser Evolution 9th Edition ($16). From a highly regarded Oregon pinot noir producer, this wine is a playful blend of nine varieties: muller-thurgau, riesling, semillion, gewürztraminer, muscat canelli, chardonnay, pinot blanc and sylvaner.

But instead of coming across as a jumble, this intensely aromatic wine is well-integrated and provides tons of tropical fruit and orange flavors delivered with a lush texture and an off-dry finish.

2003 Beringer Alluvium Blanc Knight's Valley ($16). Beringer's Napa Valley wines are the stuff of legend but its Knight's Valley portfolio, including a cabernet sauvignon, Alluvium red blend and this blend of semillon, sauvignon blan
nay and viognier, i
worth attention.
over its wonderful
bright citrus, crea
and anise aromas
lush texture and fr

2004 Beckmen
($20). This is a ne
Rhone-style blend
fast-rising produc
emerging Santa
area of Santa Barb

A good exam
whole being great
sum of the parts,
roussanne, mars
grenache blanc to
nut, star fruit and
and a lively but lux
tured body.

2002 Rosenblu Mitchell Trio ($32).
is best-known for
of outstanding zi
this Bordeaux-styl
percent merlot, 29
ernet sauvignon,
cabernet franc) fr
brook Mitchell
Napa Valley calls
palates.

It shows the t
aging in 100 perc
as well as plump
olive and a minty
admirable depth
ture.

Rich Mauro is a D
wine columnist. R
636-0194 or write t
Gazette, P.O. Box 1
Springs 80