

THE WINE GUY

# Domestics for the holidays: Great wines to give or ser

In my previous column, I shared a list of exciting imports from my recent tastings that you can use for your holiday wine shopping but also for everyday drinking. Today's focus is on domestic wines that would make great gifts, serve as a perfect accompaniment to special holiday dinners or work or everyday drinking.

## CHARDONNAY

● Robert Talbott began growing chardonnay and pinot noir in the Santa Lucia Highlands of Monterey County more than 20 years ago, long before the area was a sought-after growing region. His sleepy Hollow Vineyard (2003, 2004), Cuvee Cynthia (2003, 2005) and Diamond T (2002, 2005) are pure expressions of the area's cool climate and mineral soils. Not surprisingly, they have become highly sought after by collectors.

● Chateau St. Jean is one of the premier wine producers in Sonoma County. The winery produces a wide range of wines of consistent quality and reasonable price. Chateau St. Jean built its reputation on wine, especially two celebrated vineyard-designated chardonnays. They have been making a Robert Young Vineyard (2004, \$25) and Belle Terre Vineyard (2003, \$22) ever since



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1975. There is also a Sonoma County (2005, \$14). These are some of the state's most consistent chardonnay values.

### Other good choices:

- 2005 Kendall-Jackson Vintner's Reserve (\$12)
- 2004 Chateau Sovereign Sonoma County (\$17)
- 2005 St. Clement Carneros (\$17)
- 2003 Covey Run Reserve Chardonnay Washington (\$22)
- 2004 Cuvaison Carneros (\$25)
- 2004 Sebastiani Dutton Ranch Chardonnay RRV (\$25)
- 2004 J. Lohr Arroyo Vista (\$25)
- 2004 Baileyana Grand Firepeak (\$30)
- 2004 Chateau Sovereign Winemaker's Reserve (\$30)
- 2004 Cuvaison Estate Selection (\$36)

## SAUVIGNON BLANC

Ever since the Dry Creek Vineyard was founded in 1972, the winery has been a leading California sauvignon blanc producer. It was the first to plant

the grape in the Dry Creek Valley and is still a benchmark for the classic herbaceous, citrusy style.

Now there are three styles: the 2005 Sonoma County Fume Blanc (\$14), 2004 Estate Fume Blanc DCV3 (\$25) from the winery's oldest vineyard, and 2004 Taylor's Vineyard (\$25), from a unique clone of sauvignon blanc called sauvignon "musque."

### Other good choices:

- 2005 Woodbridge California (\$6)
- 2005 Chateau St. Jean Sonoma County Fume Blanc (\$13)
- 2005 Tangent Paragon Vineyard (\$13)
- 2005 Beckmen Estate (\$14)
- 2004 Beringer Alluvium Blanc (\$16)
- 2005 Sauvignon Republic Cellars Russian River Valley (\$18)

## OTHER WHITES

Tangent is a new portfolio of wines from the same family and winemaker responsible for the wines of Baileyana. The focus is on "alternative whites," meaning not chardonnay. The initial releases, including the sauvignon blanc above, Vineyard (\$17) and 2005 Albarno (\$17) are impressive.

the other good choices:

- 2005 Covey Run Riesling (\$8)
- 2005 Covey Run Dry Riesling (\$8)
- 2005 Covey Run Gewurztraminer (\$8)
- 2005 J. Lohr Bay Mist White Riesling (\$9)
- 2005 Concannon Pinot Gris Limited Release (\$14)
- 2005 Michael-David "Incognito" Viognier (\$20)
- 2005 Wattle Creek Alexander Valley Viognier (\$31)

## CABERNET SAUVIGNON

Wine writers often talk about regional styles of wines: The typical Bordeaux, say, is intense, yet elegant.

If there is a California style for cabernet sauvignon (more flamboyant and fruit-filled), it is exemplified by the Napa Valley. And, to my palate, Beringer Vineyards is the quintessential Napa Valley cabernet sauvignon producer. Although Beringer produces exceptional single vineyard cabernets, it is the winery's blends — the full-bodied 2002 Napa Valley (\$35) and especially the big, rich and concentrated Private Reserve (2002, \$116) — that I consider the definitive expression of Napa Style.

### Other good choices:

- 2004 Kendall-Jackson Grand Reserve (\$26)

● 2003 William Hill Napa Valley (\$26)

- 2002 Beringer Knights Valley (\$27)
- 2003 Sebastiani "Secolo" Alexander Valley (\$30)
- 2002 Beringer Knights Valley "Alluvium" (\$30/25)
- 2003 The Hess Collection Mountain Cuvee (\$35)
- 2003 St. Clement "Oropus" (\$50)
- 2003 Chimney Rock Stag's Leap District (\$52)
- 2003 Joseph Phelps Insignia (\$140)

## SYRAH

Rosenblum Cellars may be best known for its multitude of single vineyard zinfandels, but it also has become one of California's premier producers of Rhone-style wines.

Here again, numerous single-vineyard bottlings are available. Among the syrahs, start with the 2004 Rominger (\$26) and the 2004 Hillside Vineyards (\$25).

### Other good choices:

- 2005 Woodbridge California Shiraz (\$8)
- 2004 Lockwood Monterey County (\$14)
- 2003 Wild Horse Paso Robles (\$22)
- 2004 Michael-David "Earthquake" (\$28)
- 2003 Cuvaison Carneros (\$30)

● 2003 Baileyana Firepeak (\$30)

- 2003 Kuleto Napa (\$42)

## OTHER REDS

The Phillips family farming in California area since 1860. After their grapevines were sold their grapevines, Michael and David now produce wine under labels. In addition to the ael-David Viognier are recommended above, pressed with the 200 mill" Old Vine Zinfandel and 2004 "Incogni Wine, a blend of several

### Other good choices:

- 2003 Niner Ranch Sangiovese (\$2)
- 2004 Cuvaison Pinot Noir (\$25)
- 2004 Rosenblum Road Petite Sirah (\$22)
- 2003 Stags' Leap Petite Syrah (\$38)
- 2004 Rosenblum Road Reserve Petite (\$45)
- 2004 Cuvaison Pinot Noir (\$48)
- 2002 Concannon Petite Syrah (\$50)

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