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# The Grapevine

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER FOR VINESSE WINE CLUB MEMBERS



## MARTIN'S JOURNAL

*I love walking through vineyards at harvest time.*



There's something magical about gazing at bunches of grapes that you know will be transformed

into wine within a matter of just days.

A number of larger estates use mechanical harvesting to bring in the grapes, but most of the best wines are the result of hand-picked grapes that involved some measure of sorting both in the vineyard and at the winery. By eliminating the "green" fruit — especially with varieties such as Pinot Noir that are famous for ripening unevenly — wine quality is noticeably enhanced.

So, how is vintage 2008 shaping up? Our Katie Montgomery has been following developments closely, and shares some observations in her "Cellar Notes" column on page 2.

Cheers!

*Martin Stewart Jr.*

## Get Ready for a Food-and-Wine Feast Fit for Family and Friends

By Robert Johnson

*Once read that the typical American consumes (inhales?) as many calories in two days — specifically, Thanksgiving Day and Super Bowl Sunday — as he or she would in a typical week.*

That's amazing. And it's not likely to change anytime soon, as those are two of the most important dates on the calendar for getting together with family and friends. We can make excuses the rest of the year, but come Turkey Day, in particular, the only place to be is "home." And home is where we tend to stay at the table longer.

Every year about this time, we start getting questions from club members about which type of wine one should serve with the Thanksgiving feast. It's one of those queries that is almost impossible to answer.

Think about the food that's found on the "typical" table that day: salty (and possibly sweet as well)

ham... rather bland turkey... earthy Brussels sprouts... sweet yams... tart cranberries. Is there a single wine that matches nicely with every one of those dishes? In a word: no.

In the past, we've recommended trying a range of wines to fit the occasion. For instance, if one wanted to uncork one white wine and one red wine, we'd typically suggest Gewurztraminer and Pinot Noir. Another fairly safe choice to add to the mix would be a nice dry Rosé.

But the truth is that any number of wine varieties would be right at home as part of the big feast. These include the "usual suspects" such as Chardonnay and Merlot, as well as more "exotic" varieties like Riesling from Germany or Torrontes from Argentina.



The approach we now take at the Johnson home? Each guest gets to select a bottle — any bottle — from the stash, and we simply pass 'em around. If it's a smorgasbord of food, why not make it a smorgasbord of wine as well?

Remember, you'll have a couple months to recover before Super Bowl Sunday.

Check out "Editor's Journal" every Monday on [VinesseTODAY.com](http://VinesseTODAY.com).



**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.

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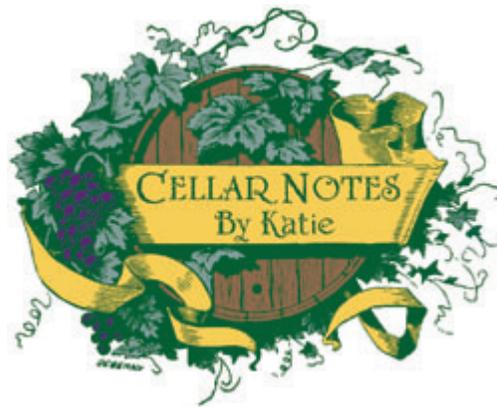
**Katie Montgomery**

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***Although we tend to think of the wine harvest season as running from September into October, you may be surprised to learn that some growers were bringing in fruit as early as August 1.***

That's right — while summer was still sweltering in the Sonoma County town of Glen Ellen, a vineyard devoted to Pinot Noir grapes was picked for use in sparkling winemaking by Gloria Ferrer, a winery based in the Carneros district a bit to the south.

Grapes earmarked for sparkling wine always are the first to be harvested, as they do not require sugar levels as high as those intended for table wines. So, there was a lot of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay picking going on in August.

The next variety to come in was Sauvignon Blanc; it came from a vineyard in the Pope Valley. And then the numerous other varieties grown in California's North Coast region followed in spurts, keeping the vineyard workers busy both night and day.

I've been collecting information from

growers and vintners that have appeared in a variety of publications, looking for clues about the quality of the 2008 California harvest. As you might expect, most take the "glass half-full" approach in their comments, but the information they provide can help us in our wine-searching activities down the road.

Remember those ill-timed spring frosts we told you about in past editions of *The Grapevine*? Well, one vineyard on Howell Mountain was 75 percent burned by that frost. Meanwhile, on Mt. Veeder, there was no damage. Location... location... location.

That frost won't impact the

ultimate quality of the vintage, but there's no question it has limited the size of the harvest. Tonnage in countless vineyards across Napa and

Sonoma counties declined from 2007 to 2008.

And what about those wildfires that scorched so much of California earlier this year, exposing the vineyards to heavy smoke for weeks at a time? They seem to have had no impact whatsoever.

All in all, we're looking forward to tasting a lot of exceptional 2008 wines.





**H**ouse. A French producer selling Champagne under its own brand name. Examples: Moët & Chandon, Taittinger and Veuve Clicquot.

**I**ron Horse. Winery in the Sonoma County town of Sebastopol that specializes in sparkling wine.

**J**ug Wine. Inexpensive wine sold in large bottles. Typically not a complimentary term.

**K**MW. Not to be confused with BMW, this is an acronym for Klosterneuburger Mostwage, the scale used in Austria to measure sugar levels in grapes.

**L**agar. A shallow trough, made from stone or cement, in which grapes are crushed by foot — still widely practiced in Portugal.

**M**atanzas Creek. Winery in Sonoma County known, in particular, for its Merlot. Also a grower of lavender and maker of lavender products.

**N**ouveau. A young wine meant for immediate consumption, Beaujolais Nouveau being the most famous example.

## APPELLATION SHOWCASE

### BEAUJOLAIS, FRANCE

*Beaujolais is sort of like the classically trained actor who has been reduced to playing walk-on parts in forgettable sitcoms in order to pay the bills.*

This winegrowing region of France is best known for its bright, fresh, exuberant wines that are released on the third Thursday in November — wines known as Beaujolais Nouveau.

These are the first wines of the Northern Hemisphere vintage. The grapes are harvested, fermented and bottled all within a matter of

days, then quickly shipped to ports around the world for distribution to wholesalers, retailers and, ultimately, consumers.

Hoisting a glass of Beaujolais Nouveau with a group of friends is a great way to toast the winegrape harvest, bid adieu to summer, and get mentally prepared for the cooler fall and winter months ahead.

But the vintners of Beaujolais would much rather be known for the 10 special crus that they craft, such as Moulin-a-Vent and Morgon. These are bottlings that compare quite favorably with the more famous — and much more expensive — wines of the Burgundy region to the north.



The average-sized vineyard in Beaujolais covers a mere 18 acres. Many families still make their own wine, but most now sell their fruit to much larger houses (Georges

Duboeuf, Louis Jadot), primarily for Nouveau. It is a business decision, just like the acceptance of a given acting job.



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**VINESSE STYLE**

**GOURMET VINEGAR**

**R**emember when one could go to a restaurant and order a simple salad with a simple oil-and-vinegar dressing?

Good luck with that now. Selecting a vinegar for a salad can be just as challenging as selecting the right wine to accompany a meal. Grapevine Trading makes a hibiscus vinegar. New York Mutual Trading makes a vinegar called Benimosu out of sweet potatoes — but not just *any* sweet potatoes; these are organic purple sweet potatoes. B.R. Cohn, a noted Sonoma County wine estate that also makes wonderful olive oil, offers a pear-Chardonnay vinegar.



According to Maggie Green, an editor of *The Joy of Cooking*, circa 2006, every kitchen should be stocked with three basic vinegars: balsamic, red

wine and rice vinegar. She recommends avoiding vinegars with added ingredients such as sugar, because those ingredients often are used to mask inferior flavors.

What is fueling the interest in high-quality vinegar? Many believe it's the shift away from the traditional American palate (which embraced sweet, salty and fat-laden foods)

to a more European palate (which leans more toward bitter and tart impressions).

An artisanal infused vinegar typically costs in the \$8-15 range, but just like fine wine, some can fetch much more. For example, a 25- to 35-year-old Giuseppe Giusti commands \$130 for a mere 100-ml. bottle at one specialty foods store in New York. (And, yes, some vinegars age just as gracefully as some wines.)

As palates evolve, more and more people are embracing high-quality vinegars because they can liven up an array of dishes — not just salads.

**BEING GREEN**

Member growers of the Lodi-Woodbridge Winegrape Commission have long been industry leaders in developing and implementing sustainable winegrowing practices. There presently are about 90,000 acres of winegrapes in California Crush District #11. Since its inception in 1992, LWWC's sustainable winegrowing program developed three components: Grower Outreach, Field Implementation, and the *Lodi Winegrower's Workbook*. After the publication of the workbook, some wondered if using sustainable winegrowing practices could add value to their winegrapes and wine. The answer would appear to be yes. For example, consumers may seek out Lodi wines because they are grown with extra care by farmers who are responsible to the land, the community and their workers. Additionally, some wineries may seek out sustainably grown winegrapes, and might even pay a premium for them. Furthermore, people may want to visit Lodi to see where sustainable winegrowing is practiced. What began with the initial question of whether sustainability could add value to winegrape production has resulted in the development of a fourth sustainable winegrowing program component: The Lodi Rules for Sustainable Winegrowing Program. It was decided to pattern the rules after those of the Healthy Grown program for Wisconsin fresh market potato growers.



## A Wine Plan for Ham

*If your local newspaper has a weekly food section, you'll soon be reading about the wine conundrum that accompanies the upcoming Thanksgiving feast.*

We touched upon the topic in this issue's cover story, and now we'd like to concentrate on one specific aspect: what type of wine to pour if the main course in your household is ham, rather than turkey.

In this increasingly time-crunched world, many families have migrated from preparing the entire feast at home to picking up certain prepared items at the supermarket to "outsourcing" the whole meal. That's one reason the popularity of Honey-Baked Ham has exploded. It's pre-cooked, pre-sliced, and just as delicious cold (perhaps even more so) than it is hot.



Even with that sweet, crunchy topping that defines the Honey-Baked Ham, the overriding palate impression provided by ham is saltiness. Just as we match wine to the flavor of a pasta dish's sauce, we select wines to accompany ham based on how they mesh with saltiness.

Since salt creates thirst, the best wines are those that have bright acidity. While every wine carries the "trademark" of the man or woman who made it, we can generally say

that appropriate choices would include:

■ **Whites** — Riesling, Pinot Grigio, Torrontes, Chenin Blanc, Gewurztraminer and sparkling Brut.

■ **Reds** — Beaujolais (particularly Nouveau), Grenache, Chianti and

sparkling Blanc de Noirs.

Keep in mind that the wine's color doesn't matter nearly as much as its "mouthfeel" — i.e., the impression on the palate. So it's perfectly fine — and perhaps even inspired — to drink white wine with a red meat such as ham.

### Four Seasons



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# The Gateway to Argentina's Wine Country

**F**or anyone planning a trip to Argentina's emerging wine country, the city of Mendoza serves as the gateway.

Mendoza, described by *National Geographic Traveler* as "an oasis of urban green in the arid Cuyo region at the foot of the Andes," has itself become a destination. Its laid-back vibe exists amid tree-lined boulevards, open-air cafes and shaded plazas.

In fact, whether to stay in Mendoza or closer to the vineyards in Lujan de Cuyo is the first decision you'll have to make when planning your trip.

The Cavas Wine Lodge in Lujan de Cuyo is nestled in a 35-acre vineyard, and each of the 750-square-foot adobe-walled units has its own Andes-facing patio and plunge pool. And on each roof, a mattress allows 360-degree views of the vineyards from a position of total relaxation.

Speaking of relaxation, the resort is known for its vinotherapy baths in the spa. And speaking of vino, the lodge

boasts a wine cellar stocked with dozens of top Argentine labels. It's also home to an award-winning winery. Little wonder many visitors head for Cavas Wine Lodge and simply... stay.

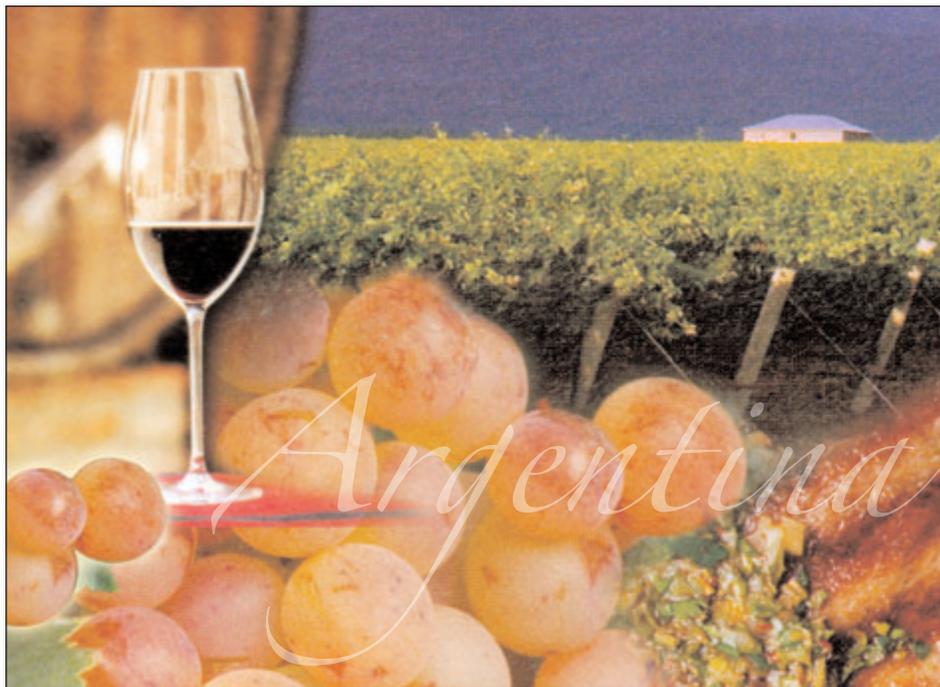
But for those wishing to mix sightseeing with leisure, the Park Hyatt in Mendoza also offers a wine-



## TOURING TIPS

based massage treatment. And at the hotel's Uvas bar, guests may arrange a wine tasting accompanied by live jazz.

Mendoza is a vinous carnivore's



dream city, as a three-course steak dinner, accompanied by a nice bottle of wine, can be had for as little as \$20 per person. Follow your nose to the 1884 Restaurant, where thick *bife de lomo* steaks seductively sizzle on an open grill. Other classic dishes at 1884 include *lechón* (young pork) and *chivito* (baby goat). Dessert? Two

words: *chocolate fanatico*.

A good way to start the day is with a cup of *cortado* (strong espresso cut with milk) at one of the many cafes found in the Sarmiento pedestrian mall. After an eye-opening jolt and some people watching, head to Plaza Independencia to shop for handcrafted leather bags, or pack a picnic and spend a few hours at the 865-acre Parque General San Martin.

When the time comes for wine tasting, opportunities just outside the city are seemingly limitless.

Concierges at the major hotels are good resources, and maps of the wine routes are widely available.

It may seem odd that such an arid place, which sees only about 8

inches of rainfall annually, could emerge as the world's fifth-largest producer of wine. But it's the lack of constant moisture that helps protect crops — including grapevines — from many of the pests and other problems that plague more moist climates.

Mendoza has emerged as Argentina's

winemaking capital, producing 80 percent of the country's wines. The vines can't produce without at least some water, and that's provided by an intricate system of aqueducts and dykes. Most of the wineries are open to the public for tasting, and many charge no fee for the palate-pleasing privilege.



And speaking of pleasing the palate, if you happen to see a sign reading *heladeria*, do not pass “Go” and do not collect \$200. Stop the car, and enjoy a bowl of some of the best ice cream to be found anywhere. The local favorite is *dulce de leche*, but you’ll also want to try cool, creamy treats made from Malbec and Viognier.

When’s the best time to visit Mendoza? If you’re in the mood to party, go right after the Southern Hemisphere’s March harvest when the Vendimia festival is held. This city-wide street party features live music, parades and seemingly bottomless glasses of *tinto* (red wine).

## For Further Information

### Cavas Wine Lodge

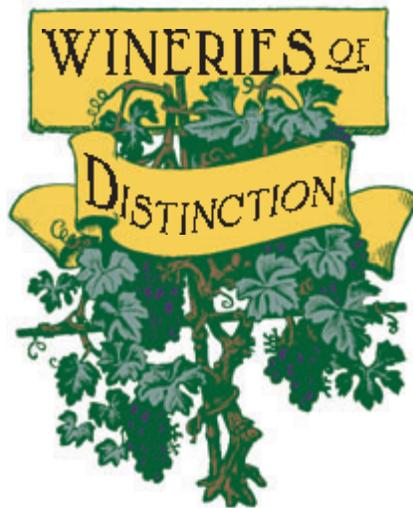
Lujan de Cuyo, Argentina  
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[cavaswinelodge.com](http://cavaswinelodge.com)

### Park Hyatt Mendoza

Mendoza, Argentina  
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[mendoza.park@hyatt.com](mailto:mendoza.park@hyatt.com)

### 1884 Restaurant

Mendoza, Argentina  
+ 54-261-424-2698



## There’s a Reason That Caymus’ Top Wine Is ‘Special’

*If there is one name that’s synonymous with Cabernet Sauvignon in the Napa Valley — a valley that has built its reputation on the variety — it’s Caymus.*

Founded in 1972 by Charlie and Lorna Wagner and their son Chuck, Caymus made a handful of varieties in its early years, but soon began concentrating exclusively on Cabernet.

It was a wise move, considering the location of the estate vineyard — in Napa’s acclaimed Rutherford district — and the intensely flavored Cabernet clone planted. The clone was acquired from Nathan Fay, a highly regarded grower in the Stags Leap area.

“I liked the character in Nate’s wine,” Charlie Wagner explained, “and he told me to help myself if I wanted some budwood. He was a generous man, and he knew I

wouldn’t injure his vineyard.”

In 1975, Caymus began producing two bottlings of Cabernet — one designated “Napa Valley” and the other known as “Special Selection.” The “Special Selection” is made only in years when truly exceptional fruit is available.

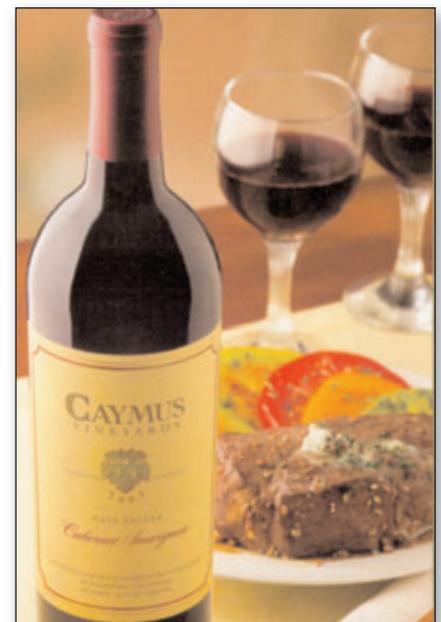
Chuck Wagner, who assumed winemaking duties in 1984, said the goal with both bottlings is to produce wines that taste delicious upon release, but also can age gracefully over an extended period of time.

The first “Special Selection” that Chuck produced, in 1984, was named “Wine of the Year” by *Wine Spectator* magazine in 1989. Five years later, the publication bestowed the same honor on the 1990 Caymus “Special Selection.” No other wine ever has been so honored for two vintages.

Today, the Caymus name is still magic among Cabernet lovers, and Chuck remains an enthusiastic vintner.

“I find the wines we make these days to my liking early on,” he said. Then he quickly added: “This is my personal choice and opinion — nothing more.”

Perhaps, but it’s certainly an *informed* opinion.



# Quotes Du Jour

■ *Mick Fleetwood, founder of the legendary rock group Fleetwood Mac, who has been producing his own wines since 2001:*

“Blending tastes is a lot like mixing sound — it has to be just right.”

■ *Robert Mondavi is gone, but what a great life he had:*

“This I know for sure: Wine has in it a touch of magic. The simple, pleasing sound of the pop of a cork is enough to announce the beginning of the happiest moment of daily life: the gathering of family and friends around the communal table. To share the fruits of our labor. To share our heartaches and joys. To put aside our worries and our fears for a while so that we can celebrate the bounty of nature and the greatest riches of being alive.”

■ *15th and 16th century artist Michelangelo, on the simple pleasures in life:*

“I feast on wine and bread, and feasts they are.”

# Q AND A

**I’ve heard that a compound called resveratrol is good for the heart, and that it’s found in wine. Is there more resveratrol in white wines or red wines?**

Red. Resveratrol exists primarily in the skins and seeds of grapes, and in making red wine, vintners keep the skins in contact with the grape juice. This process is not used when fermenting white wines, so there’s relatively little resveratrol in those. Rosé wines, which are exposed to grape skins briefly, have some resveratrol — more than whites, but less than reds.

**Our family loves to go whitewater rafting. Do you know**

**of any places where we could go rafting and be able to visit some wineries?**

Yes. In El Dorado County — a.k.a. “California Gold Country” — there are numerous wineries, and a company called Adventure Connection offers two-night

packages that include both rafting and wine tasting. Guests enjoy guided tours of some of the region’s top wineries, and then embark on a full day of riding the rapids in and around American River, Calif. For further information, visit [raftcalifornia.com](http://raftcalifornia.com), or call 800-556-6060.



*Have a question about wine? Log on to*

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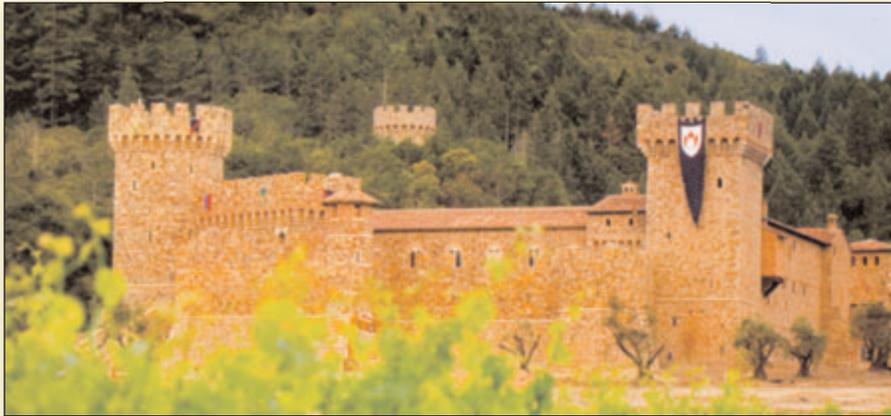
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A new winery destination in the Napa Valley is Castello di Amorosa, situated on the west side of Highway 29 between St. Helena and Calistoga. About 30 acres of vineyards surround the castle's ominous walls, gates and guard towers. For tour information, call 707-967-6272.

**3-DECADE STUDY:  
WINE TRUMPS BEER**

According to research conducted on men living in Finland, wine drinkers are healthier than those who drink beer and spirits. The study carries some weight in the medical community because it was conducted over a three-decade span. But is it definitive? That's still open to debate, since wine drinkers also tended to exercise more and smoke less.

**COMIC RELIEF: A TRIP  
TO A TASTING ROOM**

A recent edition of the syndicated comic strip "Edge City" involved characters Len and Abby visiting a winery.



In a scene all too familiar to tasting room personnel, Len gulped

while Abby sipped. In the strip's final panel, Len is nearly passed out in the back seat of the family car, while Abby observes, "It'd be nice to do a winery tour and make it to more than one!" The strip is produced by Terry and Patty Laban.

**AN ABOVE-AVERAGE  
PHILOSOPHY ON LIFE**

Daryl Sattui, the man behind Castello di Amorosa, recently said: "I have a philosophy. Average people can do great things if they don't know they're average." You can read about the castle in the "Wineries of Distinction" archives on [VinesseTODAY.com](http://VinesseTODAY.com).

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# The Grapevine COOKBOOK



## TOASTED ONION MASHED POTATOES

Here's a tasty side dish to serve with your Thanksgiving dinner. This recipe makes 8 servings.

### Ingredients

- 5 medium potatoes, peeled and cut into eighths (appx. 7 cups)
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 4 tablespoons butter (1/2 stick, divided)
- 3 cups coarsely chopped onions
- 1/4 cup 1 percent milk, warmed
- 3/4 cup light sour cream
- Salt and pepper

### Preparation

1. Place potatoes in 4.5-quart saucepan. Cover with cold water and add 2 teaspoons salt. Bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce heat to medium and boil potatoes until fork-tender (15 to 18 minutes), then drain.
2. In a 10-inch nonstick skillet, melt 2 tablespoons butter over medium

heat. Add onions and cook, stirring occasionally, until onions are light brown, then set aside.

3. Place cooked hot potatoes in large mixer bowl. Mash slightly with fork. Beat at medium speed, adding remaining butter 1 tablespoon at a time until mixed (about a minute). Continue beating, gradually adding browned onions, milk and sour cream. Add salt and pepper to taste. Beat until well mixed, but do not overbeat.
4. Serve immediately.

## ORANGE PUMPKIN PIE

Here's a recipe that offers a zesty twist to a Thanksgiving dessert tradition. The pie serves 8.

### Ingredients

- 1 unbaked 9-inch deep-dish pie shell
- 1 can (30-oz.) Libby's Easy Pumpkin Pie Mix, or similar
- 2/3 cup evaporated milk

- 2 large eggs, lightly beaten
- 2 1/2 teaspoons grated orange peel, divided
- 1 1/4 cups sour cream
- 2 tablespoons granulated sugar

### Preparation

1. Preheat oven to 425 degrees. Place pie shell in pan on baking sheet.
2. Combine pumpkin pie mix, evaporated milk, eggs and 1 teaspoon orange peel in large bowl. Pour into pie shell.
3. Bake 15 minutes. Reduce oven temperature to 350 degrees. Bake 50 to 60 minutes, or until knife inserted near center comes out clean. Cool on wire rack for 10 minutes.
4. Combine sour cream, sugar and remaining 1 1/2 teaspoons orange peel in medium bowl. Carefully spread over top of pie.
5. Bake an additional 8 minutes. Cool on wire rack 1 hour. Refrigerate for 2 hours prior to serving.

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# CELLAR SPECIALS

## WHITE WINES

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2007 Soaring Aces California Sauvignon Blanc .....	12.99
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