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The Grapevine

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER FOR VINESSE WINE CLUB MEMBERS



Exploring the Scenic *Soave Wine Route*

New Year's Resolutions
of a Vinous Nature

What to Do When
You Spill Red Wine

Avocado and the Wine
Pairing Possibilities

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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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EDITOR'S JOURNAL

New Year's Resolutions to Expand Your Wine Horizons

By Robert Johnson

Santa made his list and checked it twice. Now, it's time for the rest of us to make our annual list — of New Year's Resolutions — and try to stick to them through the entire... month of January. (Through the years, I've learned that it's best to set reasonable goals!)

The wonderful world of wine is so wide ranging and dynamic that there is no shortage of potential resolutions available. I've made my share and, amazingly, managed to keep a fair number of them.

For 2014, I'd like to suggest three potential resolutions for wine lovers. Go through the list and select one — just one — that you believe you'd have a reasonable chance of keeping. Here's the deal: Since these resolutions involve wine, how painful could they be to keep?

On behalf of all of us at the wine clubs of Vinesse, I'd like to wish you a happy and healthful new year — filled with wonderful wine experiences. Perhaps... one of these:

1. Resolve to attend a wine dinner.

Most large cities and many smaller ones are home to restaurants that occasionally host dinners focused on a single wine estate or perhaps a specific wine country. In some cases, they'll even bring in a winemaker to talk about his or her bottlings. But even without a "special guest," a wine dinner can provide not only an evening of culinary entertainment, but also the motivation to try new and

different food-and-wine pairings on your own. (Check out this issue's "Hot List" for an under-the-radar "wine lunch" destination in Las Vegas.)

2. Resolve to try a wine variety you've never had before. In the wine world, the initials "A.B.C." have come to stand for "Anything But Chardonnay," or "Anything But Cabernet." We love Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon, but they are only two of literally dozens of varieties that are widely available for people to enjoy. Make 2014 the year that you drink Chardonnay and Cabernet on a regular basis, but also expand your horizons by embracing the "A.B.C." philosophy.

3. Resolve to visit "wine country." That doesn't necessarily mean Napa Valley or Sonoma County, which are California's two most famous wine touring regions. Today, there is no state in the United States that does not have a winery — and that includes Alaska and Hawaii — which means that "wine country" may be closer than you think.





10 Fascinating Facts About Syrah

Syrah is a wine that's easy to love — even while being perhaps the most misunderstood of all wine varieties.

Here are 10 fascinating facts about this most fascinating wine...

1. Syrah is most commonly associated with the northern Rhone region of France, where it's made into a powerful wine that evokes impressions of licorice, black plums, spice and black pepper. Some of the best renditions can age gracefully for 10 years or more.

2. In France's Cote-Rotie appellation, Syrah typically is blended with a small amount of Viognier — yes, a white grape variety. This serves to enhance the blend's aroma.

3. In the southern Rhone, Syrah is blended with Grenache and Mourvedre to create the delightful wines of Chateauneuf-du-Pape.

4. In Australia, Syrah goes by the name of Shiraz... and has an entirely different personality. There, the climate and clones that are used produce wines that are more

jammy in style, often leaning toward cinnamon, strawberry and blackberry in aroma and flavor. For the most part, these are not wines to lay down; they're ready to drink when you bring them home.

5. Australian vintners also blend Syrah with Grenache and Mourvedre. These wines often are referred to simply as "GSM."

6. Ever adventurous, some Aussies also blend Syrah with Cabernet Sauvignon.

7. Besides France and Australia, Syrah is grown with great success in California, Washington, South Africa, Chile and elsewhere.

8. There really is no "California style" of Syrah. Depending on where it's grown and who makes it, it can range from bright and sassy to dark and brooding.

9. Among the food pairing partners for Syrah recommended by vintners are game birds, lamb and venison. Aussie Shiraz is ideal for barbecued meats.

10. Syrah should not be confused with Petite Sirah — an entirely different grape variety that is a cross between Syrah and Peloursin.



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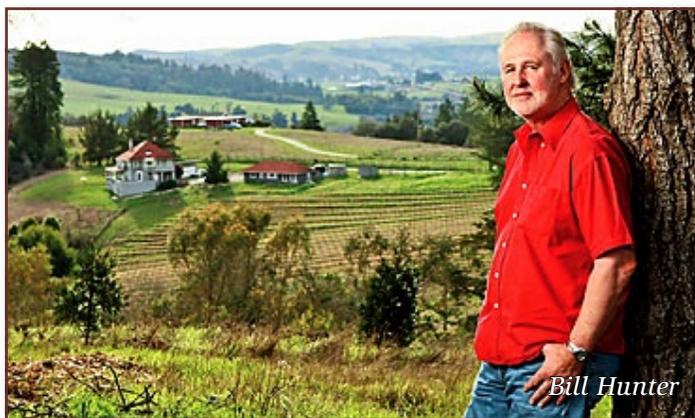
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Pioneering Sonoma’s ‘West County’ Winegrowing Area

After graduating from the University of California at Davis in 1987, Bill Hunter spent time working at Rombauer Winery in St. Helena, Calif., and Bonny Doon Winery in Santa Cruz, Calif. — estates that are owned and operated by vintners with big personalities.

In 1989, he began making wine for Chauffe-Eau Cellars in Geyserville, Calif. After building up a bank of experience with a number of varieties in a handful of appellations, Hunter wanted to be able to express his own style — his own personality.



Bill Hunter

So, in 1994, he began making his own wine on the side. He made two barrels of Chardonnay from Sonoma County’s Dutton Ranch, and a single barrel of Pinot Noir from Carneros-grown grapes. Unfortunately, someone had already registered the brand “Hunter,” so he opted to use the brand name “Chasseur” — which is French for Hunter.

His wines sold out locally almost overnight thanks to their character, personality and overall quality.

Each year thereafter, Hunter would scour Sonoma County for fruit that met his demanding criteria for quality. This allowed for slow growth that reached 2,500 cases from the 2001 harvest.

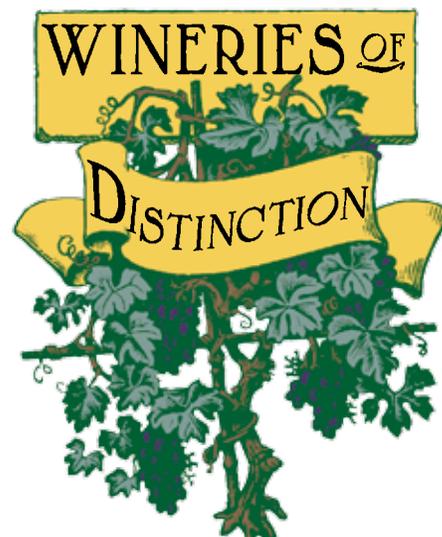
Seeing the potential of west Sonoma County, his dream was to work with Pinot Noir and Chardonnay, and to own a winery in the region where he would work for himself, focusing solely on making small lots of top-quality wine.

That’s what Chasseur Wines is all about — dedicated to small-lot, handcrafted wines in the old French tradition, with emphasis on vineyard designates.

“Our small size — presently about 2,700 cases — allows complete control

over the winemaking process, enabling us to produce the finest wines the fruit has to offer,” Hunter explains. “We are pursuing Pinot Noir and Chardonnay’s final and possibly finest frontier, Sonoma’s ‘West County.’ Still in its renaissance, this area is composed of the western edge of the Russian River Valley and beyond, known as the true Sonoma Coast appellation. We refer to this area as the ‘West County Triangle,’ the area between and around Sebastopol, Freestone and Occidental.”

Hunter says his goal is to be among the pioneers in developing the potential





Chasseur's tasting 'office'

All the equipment and processing techniques were chosen for maximum extraction of the fruit, but with attention to gentle handling. At harvest, the Chardonnays go through a long, slow, gentle press before going to barrel for fermentation. The Pinot Noir lots are fermented in small one-ton fermenters, and go through a submerged cap regime to increase extraction

and limit maceration of the skins. The barreled wines are racked with argon, an inert gas, and then filled by gravity. The finished wines are typically bottled without fining or filtration.

and that's why he works with the area's top vineyards, including Sand Hill Ranch, Green Acres Hill, Lorenzo Vineyard, Umino Vineyard and others. The facility used for wine production is a retired apple processing plant in Sebastopol, long known as the North Coast's "apple country." Dedicated to substance over style, the winery is likened to a lower Manhattan loft.

Ideal for wine processing, the compartmentalized nature of the space provides a room for every function. Harvest operations are performed in the main winery room. An interior room with natural insulation is chilled to cellar temperature and humidified for barrel storage. Wines going through malolactic fermentation are kept in a room that can be heated in the cold winter months — hence, the "warm room."

Chasseur is open to visitors by appointment, but typically is closed from Labor Day through New Year's Day because of the activities associated with the harvest and the holidays.

Winery 4-1-1
Hunter Wine Cellars, LLC
(Chasseur Wines)
 P.O. Box 561
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Open seasonally by appointment.



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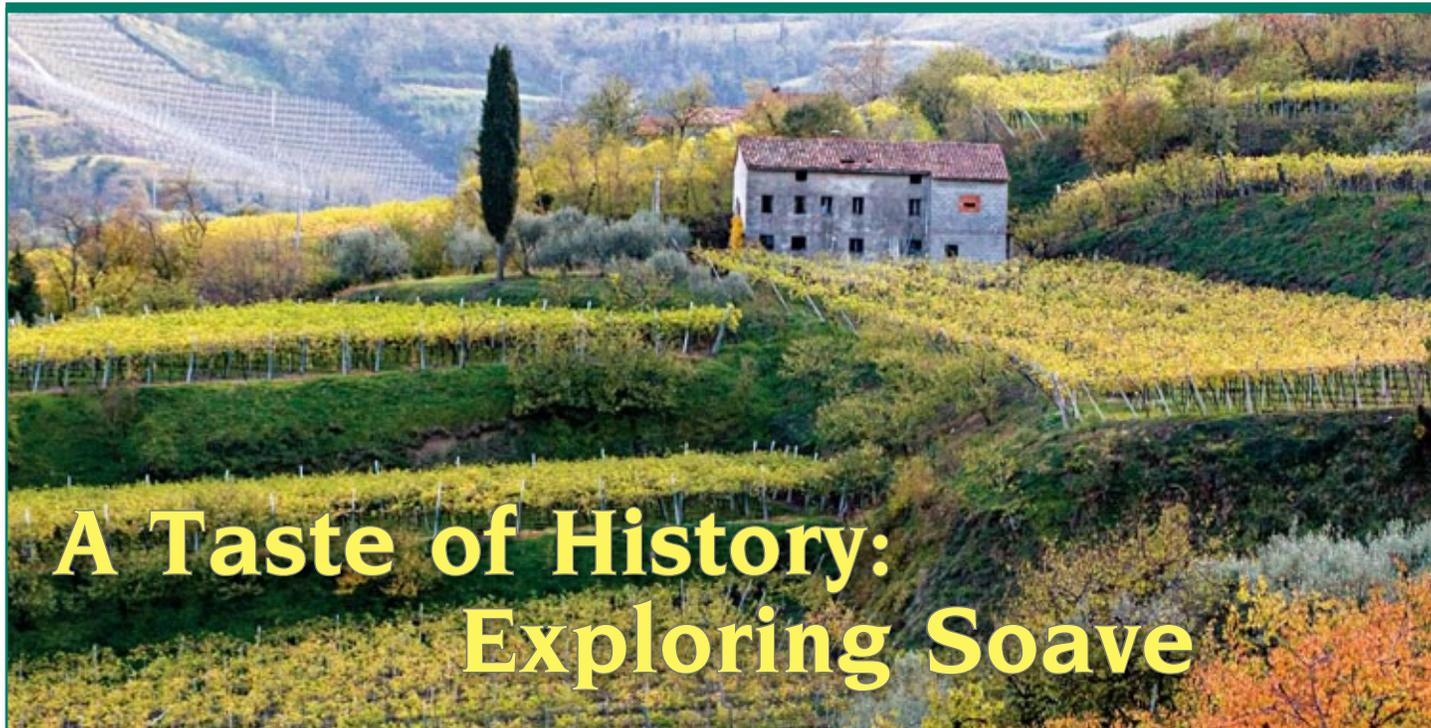
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Wine cellars. Villas. Churches. History. Traditions. Unique flavors. Magnificent landscapes. Welcome to the land of Soave, which can be experienced by following an itinerary of about 31 miles, winding around farms, wine estates, restaurants and historical attractions that lead to the medieval town from which the area takes its name.

Soave once was a Roman outpost, as can be seen from the existing street plan and surrounding land division. An inkling of the important presence of art and history is provided not only by the structure of the walls, but by the whole urban layout, which preserves the 13th-century Venetian-Gothic Palazzo Cavalli and, facing it, the church of San Lorenzo, founded in the 14th century and rebuilt in the 18th.

Also worthy of note are the Court of Justice, still the seat of the local magistracy, and the Palazzo Scaligero, once the seat of the Verona governors, and now, restored, serving as the Town Hall.

Once over the bridge crossing the Tramigna torrent, the route heads westward among the vineyards, along the provincial road S.P. 37. In the hamlet of Saint Vittore, an imposing parish church is notable for its elegant and long bell tower.

From there, a scenic road leads to Colognola ai Colli, a delightful center perched on a hill at the entrance to the Illasy Valley.

Leaving behind the inhabited area and reaching Decima, the Val d'Illasi provincial road proceeds toward Pieve di Colognola ai Colli, home of the romantic church of Santa Maria. From there, through Ca' dell'Ara, one reaches Quattro Strade, and then it's on to Mezzane Di Sotto, a small town immersed in a magnificent green valley.

A slight deviation leads to Tregnago and its castle, which dominates the hill overlooking the town. It dates to

the early Middle Ages, and was rebuilt by the de la Scala family, but all that remains today are the towers and parts of the walls.

Proceeding northward, one reaches the town of Giazza, the cradle of the Cimbrian culture of Verona, with its museum dedicated to those people from northern Europe.

At this point, the "Soave Route" bends toward Illasi, and an ancient manor made up of old villas. In the center stands the Perez-Pompei-Sagramoso Villa, once seat of the government. Its huge park extends to the top of the hill, where the ruins of the de la Scala castle can be found.

At Illasi the Town Hall and the parish church, both elegant buildings, look out on an ample square that leads to an evocative avenue of cypresses and continues to the small town called Monte. This road, which overlooks the Illasi Valley, is more like a garden, dotted with century-old olive groves interspersed with vineyards and cherry trees groves.

The view from the summit of the hill sweeps over the valleys of Illasi



TOURING TIPS



The 13th-century Venetian-Gothic Palazzo Cavalli

and Tramigna, and in the distance the castle of Soave can be seen, along with the Benci mountains and the top of the Euganean Hills.

The Route then proceeds toward Cazzano di Tramigna, providing awe-inspiring glimpses of the “Valley of the Cherry Trees,” magnificent during their annual flowering period.

Half-way along the coast, it’s a good idea to turn right, toward S. Colombano, where a small church dating from the 12th century stands, surrounded by greenery. This is where the road narrows, then continues downward among the vineyards to Costeggiola.

From here, one can go up to Castelcerino, a village from which it’s possible to descend along attractive little roads toward Montecchia di Crosara. From Fittà, for example, the “Castellaro Road” goes to Brognoligo, part of Monteforte d’Alpone. Along the way, one may admire some of the most famous Soave wine estates, including Monte Pressoni, Monte Foscarino, Castellaro, Rugate and Ronchetto.

The road goes from Brognoligo to Costalunga, and then runs once more up to the Valley of Alpone, as far as Montecchia di Crosara — a grape-growing area of great importance in the heart of Valle d’Alpone.

The road then bends toward Roncà and Terrossa, both centers of Cimbrian culture. Traveling

northward leads to S. Giovanni Illarione, at the foot of the Lessinia, an excellent starting point for getting to the Parco Regionale, passing through Vestenanove and Bolca to Campofontana.

Bolca is one of the most important centers of Lessinia, and its museum, which exhibits fossils from more than 50 million years ago, attracts thousands of visitors and scholars from all over the world every year.

The next stop is Monteforte d’Alpone, where an imposing parochial church, Santa Maria Maggiore, stands out. Just a few steps from the church, and worthy of a visit, is the 15th-century Archbishop’s Palace, erected in 1453-71 by the bishop of Verona,

Monteforte was a fortified town in Roman times, and in the 10th century a castle was built there. On its ruins, the small church of S. Antonio Abate, visible on the overhanging hill, was constructed.

The “Soave Route” then reaches the church of the Madonnina, which overlooks the town of Monteforte, and returns to Soave. All along the way, wineries and restaurants, some operated by the same families for generations, beckon the visitor to stop for a refreshing glass of Soave wine and a home-style meal.

To learn more about the Soave zone, visit veronissima.com.

VINESSE

Hot LIST

1 Hot Winter Wine Festival.

By the time Feb. 22 rolls around, millions of people across the country — particularly in the northern tier states — will be ready for a little warmth. The Arizona Wine Growers will provide a tasty opportunity for just that on that Saturday, as they host the Off the Vine Arizona Wine Festival, a multi-hour event at historic Steam Pump Ranch in Oro Valley. The ranch hosts a popular farmers market throughout the year, but on Feb. 22, Arizona wine will take center stage.

www.arizonawine.org

2 Hot Celebrity Winery. Francis Ford Coppola gets all the press among celebrity winemakers these days, but the late Raymond Burr also was a wine lover. Fans of “Perry Mason” or “Ironside” will enjoy perusing the old *TV Guide* covers and other artifacts on display at Raymond Burr Vineyards in Sonoma County’s Dry Creek Valley.

www.raymondburrvineyards.com

3 Hot Las Vegas Wine Lunch.

The French bistro Marche Bacchus is way off the beaten path known as “The Strip,” but is worth seeking out for its monthly wine lunches. Guests enjoy a three-course meal and samples of 10 wines or more for \$34.99 (plus tax and tip). In Vegas parlance, that’s a jackpot.

www.marchebacchus.com



Blush. A sweet (usually very much Bso) pink wine made from red grapes. In America, the ubiquitous example is “White Zinfandel.”

Chai. Structure used for aging wine; it holds the barrels.

Dosage. Sugar added to sparkling wine during the disgorgement process.

Enoteca. Italian term for a “wine library” — where a large, multiple-vintage collection of wine is stored. May also refer to a retail wine store.

Futures. Wine purchased, usually in large lots, prior to its release (typically prior to bottling, while the wine is still in barrels).

Grand Vin. A non-regulated term that generally refers to a winery’s top bottling. Similar to the term, “Reserve,” used by many U.S. wineries.

VINESSE STYLE



Kenwood Inn and Spa

Located in Sonoma County’s Valley of the Moon — *L*amidst vineyards, oak groves, walnut orchards and fruit trees — the Kenwood Inn and Spa is designed with hand-crafted artistry, providing an atmosphere to nourish the soul and engage the senses.

A small, peaceful hideaway for adults (18 year or older), the Inn offers 29 dreamy rooms and suites, each appointed with fireplaces, featherbeds, Italian linens for bed and bath, luxurious robes for lounging, and breakfast each morning.

The private retreat is home to a restaurant and wine bar exclusively for guests of the Inn, an award-winning spa featuring “vinotherapy” treatments and results-oriented products and serums, two outdoor heated saline pools, sunning terraces and a hot tub. With complete guest

relaxation in mind, the intimate destination does not offer television, nor does it allow pets.

Guests wake up each morning to a chef’s choice breakfast that starts with fresh squeezed juices, house-made granola and pastries, local organic yogurt, fresh fruit and daily cooked-to-order chef’s delights.

During January and February, the Inn is featuring a package called “The Perfect Winter Getaway,” which includes 30 percent off room rates, a bottle of wine and spa vouchers. For further information, visit kenwoodinn.com.

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APPELLATION SHOWCASE



The Soave Zone

The Soave zone is situated in the eastern part of the province of Verona in Italy's Veneto region.

The Soave zone — characterized by gentle rolling hills — includes parts or all of the areas belonging to the municipalities of Soave, Monteforte d'Alpone, San Martino Buon Albergo, Lavagno, Mezzane, Calidero, Colognola, Illasi, Cazzano, Ronca, Montecchia and San Giovanni Ilarione.

The majority of the vineyards are in the hills, including the historic "Classico" zone, which lies between the charming medieval town of Soave and Monteforte d'Alpone, the oldest original zone. Centuries-old castles, churches, bell towers and aristocratic villas are all part of the rich history and traditions of the area, and indicative of the region's principal product: Soave wines.

Eons ago, the Soave area was covered by a tropical sea, as evidenced by saline sediments in the soil that are expressed in Soave wine, with its rich mineral quality and distinctive fresh, clean and fruit-forward flavors. The volcanic terroir of the area also lends to the development of complex and multi-faceted white wines.

There are three different types of Soave:

- Soave DOC, which includes the sub-zones of Soave Classico and Soave Colli Scaligeri.
- Soave Superiore DOCG, which also includes wines with the "Riserva" designation.
- Recioto di Soave DOCG, a dessert wine not often found in the United States.

There are about 16,000 acres under vine in Soave, extending from the southern slopes of the Lessini Mountains on the southern margin of the Italian Alps to the alluvial plain below. The climate is influenced by the Mediterranean's warm temperatures, but has less humidity than surrounding coastal areas due to its elevation.

In the western part of Soave, the soils are calcareous, while in the eastern part, known as the Alpone Valley, soils are composed of volcanic basalt. The former generally enhances the delicate, floral qualities of Soave, while the latter lends itself to fuller, spicier wines.



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Q Does the shape of the glass really make a difference when drinking Champagne?

A Absolutely. For most of wine history, sparkling wine was consumed in goblets with wide surface areas, also known as *coupes*. While stylish in appearance, the design served to hasten the demise of the wine’s bubbles, and also led to a somewhat “flat” taste. Flutes, on the other hand, help conserve those bubbles, not to mention the wine’s aromas and flavors. When it comes to sparkling wine of any kind, a flute should be your glass of choice.



The January/February issue of *Cook's Illustrated* has good news for anyone who spills red wine on the carpet. Don't shake your head; it happens to everyone, sooner or later. The magazine tested three products formulated and promoted to remove red wine stains, using khakis, dish towels and a shag carpet. Reported the magazine: “Only Wine Away Red Wine Stain Remover completely erased the stain from the carpet without help from water or another cleaner.”

“Age appears best in four things: old wood to burn, old wine to drink, old friends to trust and old authors to read.”



— 16th- and 17th-century English philosopher, statesman, scientist, jurist, orator, essayist and author Francis Bacon

E. & J. Gallo Winery is one of the largest wine-producing companies in the world.

Fortunately, considering the amount of acreage it farms, it also takes its stewardship of the land seriously. “As a family-owned winery, it is important to us that future generations can enjoy the natural resources we take pleasure in today,” says the Gallo website. “Our commitment to the environment started in the 1930s with co-founders Ernest and Julio Gallo. Julio Gallo introduced an innovative approach to land conservation known as the ‘50/50 Give Back’ plan in Sonoma County. For every acre of land planted in vineyard, Julio set aside one acre of property for wildlife habitat. This is a practice we continue today. E. & J. Gallo Winery took the lead in drafting the Code of Sustainable Wine Growing Practices as part of a collaborative effort with the Wine Institute and the California Association of Winegrape Growers. We were also the first winery in the U.S. to receive the International Organization of Standards ISO 14001 certification for our implementation of an environmental management system to enhance our efforts to protect the environment.” In the world of wine, “big” isn’t necessarily “bad.”



Sheraton Hotels and Resorts is expanding its test “Social Hour” program to more than 430 hotels worldwide. Why? Because the wine-focused events were wildly popular. In a poll of guests, 95% said they were “likely” or “very likely” to return for another Social Hour — once again demonstrating that wine is the most social of adult beverages. (Source: USA Today)



3,700

Age, in years, of a wine cellar unearthed in the ancient city of Tel Kabri, Israel. The excavation netted 40 jars in assorted sizes that could have filled about 3,000 modern wine bottles. (Source: Bloomberg News)

FOOD & WINE PAIRINGS



Avocado

Cinco de Mayo is prime time for the nutritionally heroic fruit known as the avocado, as households across the country prepare spicy guacamole to accompany refreshing glasses of cerveza.

But there's one day when even more avocado is consumed in the United States. That's right: Super Bowl Sunday, which in 2014 takes place three months and three days prior to Cinco de Mayo.

In many households, avocado has become a year-round staple. We may cringe at its price at certain times of the year — it's among the more expensive of all fruits and vegetables — but we grin and bear it after considering the stress-fighting potassium and monounsaturated fatty acids that it provides.

The avocado is native to central Mexico, where the ancient Aztecs used it to make soups or sauces. It may have been around longer, but the oldest avocado artifacts date back to 10,000 B.C., found in a cave 150 miles inland from Veracruz.

There are numerous avocado varieties, the most popular being the Hass. As is the case with wine, California produces 90 percent of the avocados grown in the United States.

Of course, guacamole is not the only use for the avocado, just as beer is not the only adult beverage suitable for accompanying guac.

As long as your guacamole is not over-the-top spicy, Sauvignon Blanc makes a wonderful pairing partner. Other options include dry (not sweet) Riesling and sparkling wine. The culinary marriage is downright poetic: Chip. Dip. Sip.

Sauvignon Blanc also works well with an avocado that's stuffed with mildly spiced shrimp.

The avocado's creamy, nutty quality makes it a nice companion to "California-style" Chardonnay — i.e., bottlings that have undergone malolactic fermentation to create a rich, buttery texture.

You also can simply spread avocado on toasted multi-grain bread for a filling, good-for-you treat that also pairs well with Chardonnay — either "California-style" or "unoaked."

For more on the health benefits of avocados, and to access recipes, visit avocadocentral.com.

Four Seasons



WINES THAT MATCH THE SEASON

Summer — wines for barbecues, picnics or just for sipping. Fall — wines for hearty, harvest-time dishes. You get the idea. All wines are selected by our Tasting Panel to pair beautifully with the foods you love.

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- Detailed Tasting Notes for each featured wine

WINE COLOR MIX:

Reds, Whites, or Mixed

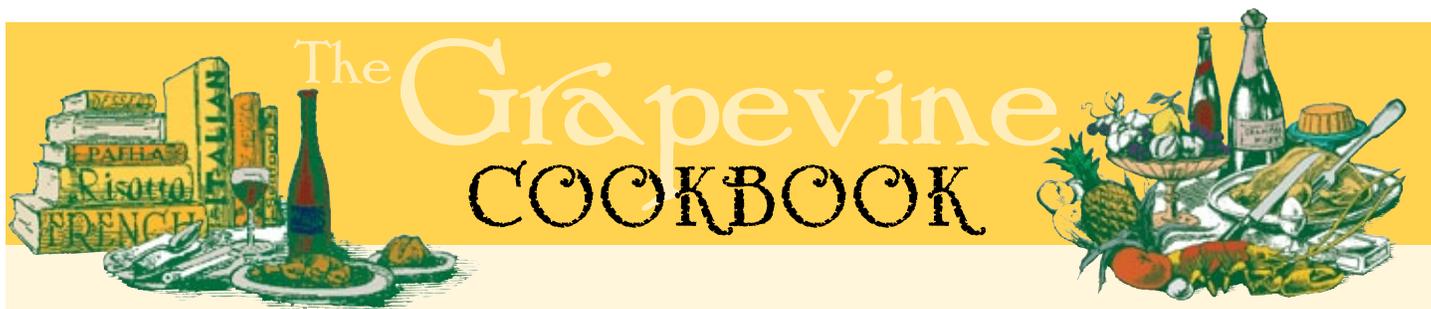
FREQUENCY:

4-times per year, plus a special holiday shipment

PRICE:

\$98.99 average per shipment including shipping

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CORSICAN LAMB STEW

Perfect for a cold winter night, this dish pairs nicely with Merlot or Cabernet Sauvignon. This recipe makes 4 servings.

Ingredients

- 2 lbs. lamb shoulder, trimmed of fat and cut into 3/4-inch cubes
- Flour (for dredging)
- 1/2 cup olive oil
- 1 onion, chopped
- 12 cloves garlic
- 1/2 cup Merlot or Cabernet Sauvignon (not too “oaky”)
- Lamb stock (to cover)
- 8 small artichoke hearts, quartered
- 24 Greek olives, pitted
- 1 fennel bulb, sliced
- 2 tomatoes, peeled, seeded and diced
- 2 tsp. rosemary, chopped
- 1 Tbs. parsley
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Lemon juice

Preparation

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees.
2. Season lamb with salt and pepper, then dredge in flour.
3. In a heavy bottomed casserole pot, saute in olive oil, browning lightly on all sides.
4. Saute onions until transparent.
5. Add garlic, wine and lamb stock to cover.
6. Bake for 15 minutes, turning meat a few times.
7. Add artichokes, fennel, olives and rosemary. Cook for another 15-20 minutes, or until fennel is tender.
8. Skim off fat. Add tomatoes and parsley. Season with lemon juice, salt and pepper.

RED POTATO SALAD WITH AVOCADO

This dish is easy to prepare (it takes only about 15 minutes), and matches nicely with Chardonnay — either “California-style” (rich and buttery) or unoaked. This recipe yields about 8 servings.

Ingredients

- 2 lbs. red potatoes, cut into 1-inch cubes
- 1 cup low-fat mayonnaise
- 5 tsp. cider vinegar
- 2 tsp. Dijon-style mustard
- 3/4 tsp. ground black pepper
- 3/4 tsp. salt
- 4 green onions, sliced
- 2 ripe Hass avocados, seeded, peeled and chopped into 1/2-inch pieces

Preparation

1. Place potatoes in a medium pan and cover with water.
2. Bring water to a boil and cook potatoes for about 15 minutes, or until just tender when pierced with a fork.
3. Drain well and pour into bowl.
4. Combine mayonnaise, vinegar, mustard, salt and pepper.
5. Add dressing and green onions to potatoes and gently toss.
6. Stir in avocados.
7. Refrigerate for at least 4 hours to allow flavors to meld.

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