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# The Grapevine

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER FOR VINESSE WINE CLUB MEMBERS

**How to Uncork a  
Champagne Bottle**

**Holiday Gift Ideas  
for Those Into Wine**

*Special  
Holiday  
Edition*

**Perfect Wines for  
Holiday Gatherings**

**2 Festive Recipes  
Guests Will Love**

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### 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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## EDITOR'S JOURNAL

# Timely Ideas to Make Your Holidays Bright

By Robert Johnson

**W**ell, the weather outside is frightful, but the wine inside's delightful, and since we've got wine to pour, there's no need to open the door.

And now you know why I stick to writing about wine, and leave the songwriting to the experts.

In case you couldn't figure it out from the cover, this is our annual Holiday Edition of *The Grapevine*. It's packed with entertaining reading and useful information to help you get the most out of the season — which means making sure that wine plays a big part in it.

At this most wonderful time of the year, we've devoted our Cellarmaster feature to an extremely important topic: how to safely open a bottle of Champagne (or other sparkling wine such as Prosecco from Italy or Cava from Spain). It's important for two reasons: 1. The methodology we suggest will help you avoid eye injuries caused by flying corks, and 2. It will help you enjoy the sparkling wine more by transferring the bubbles to your glass, rather than having them escape in a spray of foam.

Speaking of sparkling wine, we've found a restaurant in New York City where the sommelier takes pairing wine and pizza seriously — and he's using Champagne for most of his recommended pairings. You can read more about it in our Vinesse Hot List department.



Need a gift idea for someone who is just as into wine as you are? Or perhaps someone you'd like to have catch the wine bug? Our Vinesse Style department is devoted to ideas for holiday gifts that have a wine theme.

Of course, our Cookbook page includes a pair of recipes that are best described as "festive," with suggested wine pairings included.

And finally, our Food & Wine Pairing feature takes a detailed look at the perfect wines for holiday gatherings. That means everything from a simple game-day party to an elaborate New Year's dinner, and from a holiday brunch for a few friends to a company party for dozens.

I always look forward to producing this issue of *The Grapevine*, and I hope you enjoy reading it just as much. Happy Holidays... and Happy New Year!



## How to (Safely) Remove a Champagne Cork

**B**ack in the “good old days,” a team would win the World Series, and shortly thereafter, the cameras would take you inside the winning team’s locker room.

Bedlam then would ensue as Champagne bottles would be opened, with corks flying in all directions and foam spraying from the bottles. Within a few seconds, the eyes of both the TV announcer and the players would be stinging. Those were not tears of happiness we saw on our screens.

After this year’s World Series, most of the Kansas City Royals players were decked out in elaborate glasses to protect their eyes. A few looked like they were going scuba diving. One can only wonder whether the company that provided that eyewear had to pay a placement fee.

The glasses would not have been necessary had those bottles of Champagne been opened properly — beginning with admonishment to not shake them. Shaking builds the pressure inside the bottle and can transform a cork into a dangerous flying object.

Step by step, here’s how to remove a Champagne cork safely:



1. Remove the foil on the top of the bottle.
  2. Slowly “unwind” the wire “cage” handle.
  3. As you remove the cage, quickly place a hand towel on top of the cork.
  4. While gently pressing down, slowly twist the cork.
- Note: You need to press down in order to counter the pressure of the bubbles inside the bottle.
5. Keep holding the cork with the towel while it comes out of the bottle’s neck.

Instead of a loud “pop,” you’ll instead hear a gentle “poof,” and the wine will be ready to pour.

By choosing “poof” over “pop,” you’ll be protecting not only your eyes, but also those of everyone else in the room.

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- Detailed Tasting Notes for each wine



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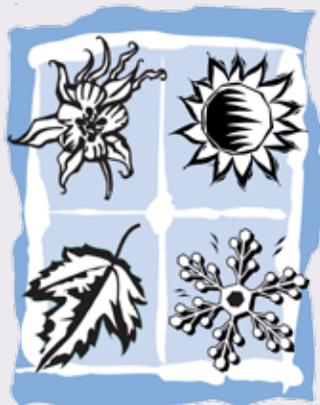
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## Four Seasons



### 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.

### EACH SHIPMENT INCLUDES:

- 4 bottles of specially-selected wines
- Detailed Tasting Notes for each featured wine

### WINE COLOR MIX:

Reds, Whites, or Mixed

### FREQUENCY:

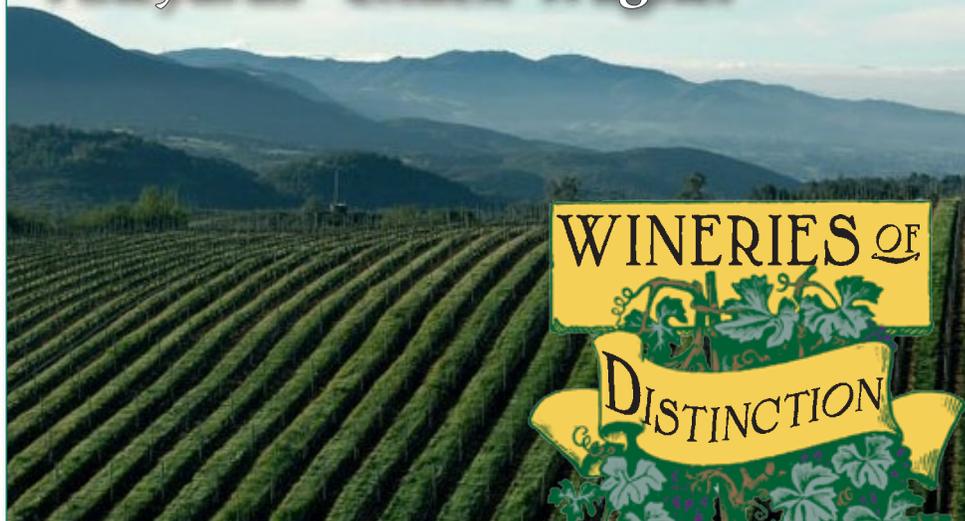
4-times per year, plus a special holiday shipment

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## A Major Award for Caymus Vineyards' Chuck Wagner



**A** legendary Napa Valley vintner has been honored with one of the wine world's most prestigious awards — a nice way to begin the holiday season.

The American Wine Society selected Caymus Vineyards co-founder Chuck Wagner for the 2015 AWS Award of Merit. Wagner received the award at the AWS Annual Conference's Grand Banquet on November 7.

"Being recognized by the American Wine Society is a great honor," said Wagner, who started Caymus in 1972 with his parents, Charlie and Lorna Belle Glos Wagner. "After more than 40 years in the wine business, I'm still learning, so the mission of AWS to help people discover and enjoy the world of wine means a lot to me personally."

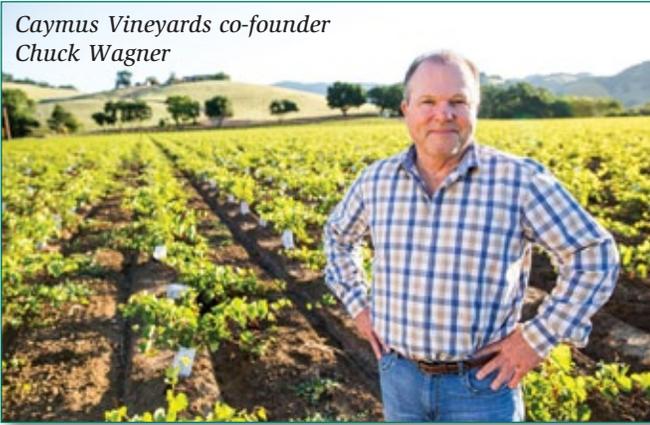
Since 1971, the AWS Award of Merit has been given to a wine industry luminary. The basic criterion for the award is substantial and meritorious achievement in at least one phase of wine activity, such as viticulture, enology, education, journalism or merchandising.

For each nominee, consideration is given to his or her actual accomplishments in comparison to others in the same field, and their impact on improving the quality of wine, increasing or extending the consumption or appreciation of wine, and so on — in other words, the sum

### Winery 4-1-1 Caymus Vineyards

The winery is located in Rutherford, Calif., and seated tastings are available by appointment. The tasting lasts approximately 45 minutes and features wines from the Wagner Family portfolio, including the "Special Selection" Cabernet Sauvignon, along with a small sampling of artisan cheeses. The cost is \$40 per person, and reservations may be made by calling 707-967-3010.

*Caymus Vineyards co-founder  
Chuck Wagner*



total of accomplishments over a period of time.

“Chuck Wagner started Caymus Vineyards with his parents at a time when Napa Valley was barely on the map, and he played a huge role in changing that,” said John Hames, Executive Director of the AWS.

“Today, Caymus is a leading producer of Cabernet Sauvignon, but Chuck is still a farmer at heart, with a humility that belies his success. On many days, he can be found doing what he loves best — tending to the vines and working alongside his kids.”

The Wagners come from a long line of grape growers and winemakers, with a farming legacy that can be traced back nearly 160 years in the Napa Valley. It has been more than 40 years since they founded Caymus Vineyards, and today the family is proud to showcase a collection of wines that have a reputation for quality and consistency, sourced from the premiere wine growing regions of California.

Their desire to do something truly special, and make the finest wines they can, drives them to try new techniques, refine practices, and continue to improve the quality of their wines.

Charlie Wagner Sr. began as a “home winemaker” in the 1960s, using grapes

planted behind their farmhouse, and today his son, Chuck Wagner, continues to make world-renowned Caymus Cabernet Sauvignon in Napa Valley.

To date, Caymus is the only winery to ever receive *Wine Spectator’s* Wine of the Year award twice. Each time, it was for its “Special Selection” Cabernet Sauvignon bottling.

Chuck’s oldest son, Charlie, makes Mer Soleil Chardonnay in the Santa Lucia Highlands of Monterey County, and Conundrum, which has set the benchmark for luxury California wine blends for more than 25 years. Son Joseph makes Belle Glos Pinot Noir, sourced from three prestigious coastal appellations of California. Chuck’s daughter, Jenny, recently joined the family business, producing Emmolo Napa Valley Sauvignon Blanc and Merlot.

With such a talented group of younger Wagners already producing world-class wines, the family’s wine legacy figures to be enhanced for many years to come.

## ***Past AWS Award of Merit Recipients***

In receiving the American Wine Society’s Award of Merit, Chuck Wagner joined a prestigious list of fellow vintners and wine industry contributors:

- Konstantin Frank
- Leon Adams
- Maynard Amerine
- Harold Olmo
- Andre Tchelistcheff
- Robert Mondavi
- Louis P. Martini
- Vernon Singleton
- Warren Winiarski
- Vincent Petrucci
- Ann C. Noble
- Peter M.F. Sichel
- Mike Grgich
- Kent Rosenblum
- Zelma Long
- Gina Gallo

# Light & Sweet

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- Detailed Tasting Notes for each featured wine

### **WINE COLOR MIX:**

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### **FREQUENCY:**

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### **PRICE:**

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To learn more about this Club, call 800-823-5527 or visit [www.Vinesse.com](http://www.Vinesse.com)

# Have a Z'inf'ul Good Time in California's Lodi Region



*Old head-trained Zinfandel vines.*

**L**ocated between San Francisco and the Sierra Nevada mountains, Lodi wine country makes a great day trip — or a destination in its own right.

Over the past decade, fourth- and fifth-generation winemakers dedicated to the soils and vines have brought creative winemaking and cutting-edge technology to the region, and that has catapulted Lodi into the spotlight.

The Lodi appellation has a classic Mediterranean climate, featuring warm days and cool evenings. Situated 100 miles directly east of San Francisco Bay at the edge of the San Joaquin/Sacramento River Delta, cool delta breezes provide the region with a reliable, natural “air conditioning” throughout the growing season. This perfect climate allows Lodi winemakers to consistently craft a diverse set of delicious full-flavored wines that display a refreshing natural acidity.

Lodi receives the majority of its 17 inches of annual rainfall (in non-drought years) during the winter months. This relatively dry growing season reduces pest and disease problems, and provides winemakers with precise control

over vine growth through careful irrigation management. This unique combination allows Lodi grapes to reach physiological ripeness with minimal impact upon the land.

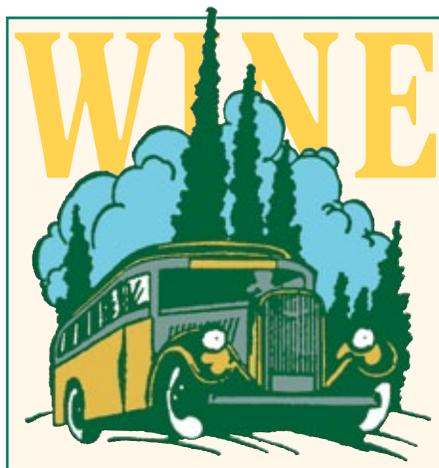
Lodi's diverse soils were formed thousands of years ago through geological events and alluvial waters. Two major rivers originating in the Sierra Nevadas feed the Lodi appellation: the Mokelumne and Cosumnes. These rivers have brought

soils rich in granitic-based minerals that lend complex flavors to the wines of Lodi.

Historically, the vineyards were developed in the fine sandy soils surrounding the community of Lodi. It's there, along the banks of the Mokelumne River, where the majority of Lodi's century-old, own-rooted Zinfandel vineyards can be found.

Recent expansion has driven vineyards into previously undeveloped portions of the appellation. Much of this growth has been in the rolling hills along the eastern edge of the region, where a diverse range of older, lower fertility soils are found. These ideal winegrowing soils range from heavier and clay-based in the south to well-drained and stony in the north. The area is noted for producing well-structured red wines with rich mouthfeel, along with lively, refreshing whites.

Lodi is predominately a red winegrowing region, with approximately two-thirds of the acreage dedicated to red varieties.



## TOURING TIPS



*Lodi Wine & Visitor Center.*

It's home to all of California's leading varieties, and has long been the leading producer and California's best-kept secret for Cabernet Sauvignon, Chardonnay, Merlot, Sauvignon Blanc and Zinfandel.

While there are more than 100 varieties of winegrapes that call the soils of Lodi home, there is one variety in particular that the region hangs its wine hat on: Zinfandel.

Crushing nearly 40 percent of California's total Zinfandel crop each year, it's no wonder that Lodi has been dubbed the "Zinfandel Capital of the World" by those in and outside of the region. One of the reasons that makes Lodi Zinfandel grapevines so special is the sheer age of the vines. The majority of the region's gnarly, old head-trained (growing without a trellis system) Zinfandel vines were planted as far back as the late 1880s to early 1900s.

When it's time to explore this exciting region, start your day at the Lodi Wine & Visitor Center to pick up a wine trail map, and chat with a guide for the latest winery

information. The Visitor Center also features an expansive tasting bar with a wide selection of Lodi appellation wines, an educational demonstration vineyard, and a gift shop stocking handcrafted products and Lodi giftware.

The Visitor Center provides

a great introduction to the delicious wines of the Lodi appellation. Expert staff members lead guests through a guided tasting of some of the region's finest wines. Eight wines are offered daily, and the selections are rotated weekly.

Zinfandel goes great with good ol' fashioned barbecue, and if you're in town during the week, grab lunch at Tin Roof BBQ. The smoked pulled pork sandwich and tri-tip chili with cornbread are amazing. Folks at the Visitor Center will be able to provide directions — guaranteed.

After visiting a few wineries, remain on theme by having dinner at Zin Bistro. It's a quaint hole-in-the-wall restaurant located in a tiny shopping center on Lodi Avenue, one of the town's main thoroughfares. Whether you're looking for fresh fish, pasta or steak, Zin Bistro has something for everyone.

A visit to Lodi wine country will reward the senses with stunning scenery, good food and great wine. You'll have so much fun, it's almost... Zinfu!

# VINESSE

## Hot LIST

**1 Hot Hawaii Wine List.** On the island of Hawaii, the Sheraton Kona Resort & Spa at Keauhou Bay has developed a wine list inspired by the lava rock surrounding Rays on the Bay and the Kona coast. If a wine is made from a region noted for its volcanic soils, it's eligible for this list. To date, the lineup includes selections from Volcano, Hawaii; Napa, Calif.; Dundee Hills, Ore.; and the Italian growing areas of Soave and Campania.

[www.sheratonkona.com](http://www.sheratonkona.com)

**2 Hot Wine Festival.** In the world-class skiing destination of Aspen, Colo.? Yes... but not until next June. The 2016 Food and Wine Classic in Aspen is scheduled for June 17-19, but be aware that tickets go on sale December 9.

[www.foodandwine.com/classic](http://www.foodandwine.com/classic)

**3 Hot Pizza Wine.** We normally recommend a spicy California Zinfandel when pairing wine with pizza. But at New York City's Marta restaurant, master sommelier Jack Mason has curated a list of around 50 sparkling wines to complement the Roman-style pizzas. "The Champagne has bright acidity that's very refreshing," Mason told *Food and Wine* magazine. "When you take a bite of pizza topped with salty cheese and a tangy red sauce, then have a sip of rosé Champagne, it's just explosive."

[www.martamanhattan.com](http://www.martamanhattan.com)

### For Further Information

**Lodi Wine & Visitor Center**  
2545 W. Turner Road  
Lodi, CA 95242  
209-365-0621  
Open Daily, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.

**Tin Roof BBQ**  
171 S. Guild Ave.  
Lodi, CA 95240  
209-366-1128  
Open Weekdays,  
11 a.m.-4 p.m.

**Zin Bistro**  
722 W. Lodi Ave.  
Lodi, CA 95240  
209-224-8223  
Open for Dinner,  
5-8:30 p.m.



**I**ce Wine. Although it has slightly different requirements for this classification depending on the country, this is a sweet wine made from last-of-the-harvest grapes with high sugar levels.

**J**eroboam. A large bottle that holds the equivalent of six standard sized (750-ml.) bottles.

**K**abinett. German term for a wine of quality — typically the best of Germany’s dry Riesling wines.

**L**oire. A French wine region known primarily for Chenin Blanc, Cabernet Franc and Sauvignon Blanc.

**M**aceration. After crushing, this is the process of allowing grape skins and juice to ferment together. The goal is to enhance color, aromas and tannins.

**N**ose. Another word for the bouquet, or aromas, of a given wine.

## VINESSE STYLE

### HOLIDAY GIFT IDEAS

*Is there a wine lover on your holiday gift-giving list? Not sure what to get him or her? Allow us to make a few suggestions...*

■ Keep an eye out for upcoming Vinesse Cyber Circle offers. We have curated collections of many types of wine and to accommodate many interests. There’s bound to be a collection that matches the interests of someone on your list. P.S.: Be on the lookout for our famous “Grab Bags,” which enable you to purchase a lot of wine for not a lot of money, and to spread good cheer to numerous friends with one simple purchase.



■ As a general rule, a bottle of wine should never be placed on a tablecloth — unless you don’t care about staining that tablecloth. Wine bottle coasters, which are available in a array of styles and with an endless variety of artwork, protect the tablecloth and make great gifts.

■ Nothing says “wine country” like a vineyard scene from Tuscany. Whether it’s a small watercolor in a frame for hanging in your kitchen, or a colorful depiction on kitchen towels, if it has a Tuscan theme, it’s almost guaranteed to be appreciated.

■ Bottle openers. No kitchen drawer can have too many corkscrews. Also consider more sophisticated devices that can make popping a cork a snap.

■ Wine-themed notecards. Great for communicating with fellow wine-loving friends throughout the year, and available in the gift shops of many winery tasting rooms.



## THE ONE THAT STARTED IT ALL!

- Hand-crafted gems produced by little known or small estates
- Limited-production bottlings
- Under-the-radar wines you won’t find in supermarkets

#### EACH SHIPMENT INCLUDES:

- 6 bottles from all over the wine world
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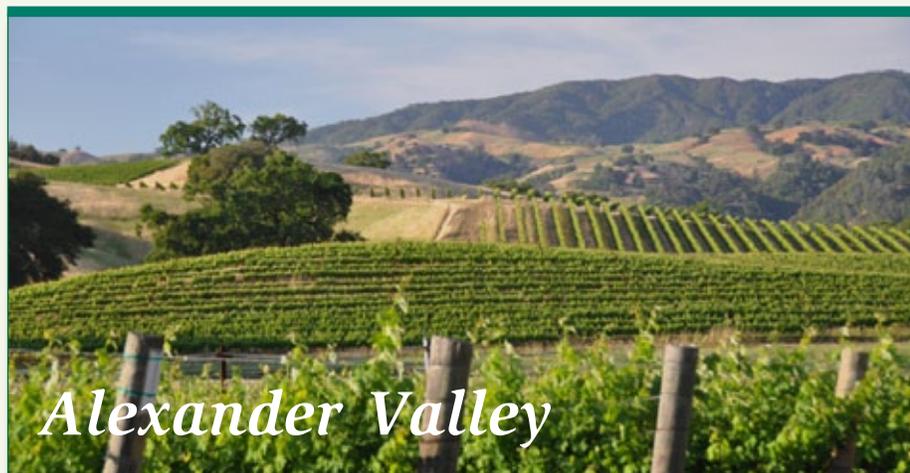
**WINE COLOR MIX:** Reds, Whites, or Both — Your Choice!

**FREQUENCY:** Monthly

**PRICE:** Only \$12-\$15 average per bottle plus shipping

To learn more about this Club, call 800-823-5527 or visit [www.Vinesse.com](http://www.Vinesse.com)

## APPELLATION SHOWCASE



### Alexander Valley

***In 1841, Cyrus Alexander arrived in an untamed valley to manage the Sotoyome Rancho, a Mexican land grant owned by a San Diego sea captain, Henry Delano Fitch, and his wife, Josefa Carrillo.***

As payment for his services, Alexander received 9,000 acres on the eastern side of the valley, where he built his home. He also planted an orchard, constructed a tannery, and built the first grain mill in the area. And he planted a vineyard.

In the three decades following the Gold Rush of 1849, the population of Alexander Valley grew quickly. By 1875, some 230 acres were devoted to vineyards.

Over the next half-century, more settlers discovered this rich land and good timber. Early residents planted wheat, grazed livestock, and grew fruits and vegetables.

As families acquired land and farming techniques improved, valley farmers began to specialize in prunes. As late as the 1960s, the valley was blanketed in white prune blossoms each spring, and the Prune Blossom Tour brought visitors from far and wide.

Labor intensive, prone to weather damage, and vulnerable to price competition from elsewhere, prunes gradually gave way to grapes. Family wineries and grape growers suffered during Prohibition, but began to plant grapes again in the

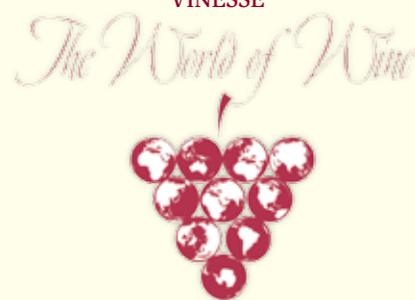
middle decades of the 20th century. Nearby Healdsburg, formerly known as “The Buckle of the Prune Belt,” is now a genial gateway to a world-class wine region.

Located at the northern end of Sonoma County, the Alexander Valley is 22 miles long and varies in width from two to seven miles. There are 76,900 acres of land, of which 15,000 acres are planted to premium wine grapes.

On the hillsides to the east and west, and adjacent to the Russian River winding along the valley floor, the valley is home to a diversity of microclimates that support the growth of many varieties. Over the years, winegrowers have learned the optimum places to cultivate each particular grape.

Cabernet Sauvignon grapes thrive from the valley floor all the way up the rolling hillsides and mountain ridges. The gravelly loam soils straddling the river encourage Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc and Merlot to flourish. Alexander Valley also is home to Zinfandel and Rhone varieties, including Syrah and Viognier.

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- 6 bottles of specially selected wines from one country or region of the wine world
- Detailed Tasting Notes for each featured wine

### WINE COLOR MIX:

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### FREQUENCY:

6 times per year

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**Q** What does the word “Reserve” mean on a wine bottle label?

**A** Technically... and legally... nothing, presuming it’s a wine that’s made in the United States. Other countries have laws or at least guidelines governing the use of certain language on bottle labels, but not here in America.

17.6

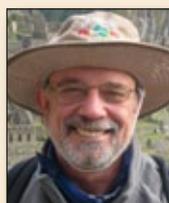
The maximum temperature, in degrees Fahrenheit, at which grapes may be legally picked for ice wine in Canada.

“In victory, you deserve Champagne. In defeat, you need it.”



— Napoleon Bonaparte

“My only regret in life is that I didn’t drink enough Champagne.”



— Robert Noecker

The late summer and early fall harvest season gets the most attention in the world of wine. But important activities take place in vineyards throughout the year, including the winter, and especially in vineyards where environmentally friendly practices are embraced. The most important vineyard practice during the winter is pruning, and it requires highly skilled workers. The purpose is to guide the vine in certain directions and for particular purposes. In Napa Valley, for example, much of this work is done by vineyard workers who are year-round employees. And sometimes pruning decisions are made for less-than-obvious reasons. For instance, some vintners may prune their Merlot vines a full two weeks later than normal in order to align the stages of growth with the later-ripening Cabernet Sauvignon, which is Merlot’s frequent blending partner.

### WINE 101: HOW TO DRINK WINE:

It seems like the most basic of all tasks. Simply pour wine into a glass, bring the glass to your lips... and drink.

Indeed, that’s really all that’s involved in drinking wine. But if you really want to *experience* and *enjoy* wine to its fullest, it takes just a little more “work.”

Here’s a step-by-step approach to drinking wine the right way:

**1.** Pour the wine into a large glass. You want the wine to fill up no more than half of the glass,



giving it a chance to “breathe.”

**2.** Swirl the wine in the glass. Place the stem of the glass between your thumb and index finger, and gently allow the wine to slosh around. This will help release the

wine’s aromas by exposing it to air.

**3.** Smell the wine. And don’t be dainty about it. Stick your nose as far as you can into the glass, and then take several short sniffs. What you smell ultimately will “connect” with what you taste.

**4.** Take a sip. Think about the flavors and other ways you might describe it.

**5.** Think about the after flavor. Is it pleasant? Does it last for several seconds? A long after flavor is one sign of a top-quality wine.

## FOOD & WINE PAIRINGS



### *Holiday Parties*

***Just because Thanksgiving has come and gone for another year, it doesn't mean the party season is over. In fact, for many people, it's just beginning.***

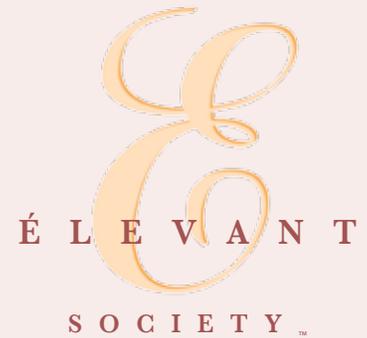
You know you'll be renewing your gym membership after the first of the year, so why not make it really worthwhile by enjoying what's left of 2015 while you can? There are several more reasons for celebration remaining before the clock strikes midnight on January 1, and wine can — and should — be a part of all of them.

■ **New Year's Eve** — Before you pop those corks with Ryan Seacrest or Anderson Cooper and Kathy Griffin, plan a buffet meal so guests can serve themselves and gather around the flat-screen at their leisure. With a number of dishes from which to choose, guests will need wines known for their food affinity. Plan to have a not-too-oaky Chardonnay and an off-dry Riesling on hand, and for red wine fans, open bottles of Sangiovese and Pinot Noir.

■ **Company Party** — Although some companies now shy away from serving alcohol at their holiday parties, many still do. Wine is a responsible choice because it's low in alcohol compared to spirits. With so many palates to please, it's best to go with a bright, refreshing white wine such as Sauvignon Blanc, and a smooth, easy-drinking red wine such as Merlot.

■ **Holiday Brunch** — This is an opportunity to trot out old family favorites and experiment with new recipes. Because of the time of the day (late morning, in most cases), you can feature both breakfast and lunch items. Of course, no brunch is complete without sparkling wine, as it matches nicely with a wide variety of dishes, and refreshes the palate as well. Those tiny bubbles also make it fun to drink.

■ **Game-Day Tailgate Party** — You don't have to go to a football game and sit in the parking lot in order to partake of that Midwest and East Coast tradition of setting up a grill outside on a cold fall or winter day. Your backyard will do just fine, and you'll also enjoy much more pleasant bathroom facilities when nature calls. With grilled fare — from big, spicy brats to thick, juicy steaks — Zinfandel makes the perfect pairing partner.



**IT'S NOT FOR EVERYONE.  
IS IT FOR YOU?**

Vinesse created the Élevant Society to meet members' demands for super-premium wines.

While virtually all members of the original American Cellars Wine Club were very satisfied with their monthly selections, some wanted more, and they were willing to pay for it.

### **EACH ÉLEVANT SOCIETY SHIPMENT INCLUDES:**

- 2 or 4 bottles — your choice — of super-premium wines, mostly big and bold red varieties or blends
- Detailed Tasting Notes for each featured wine

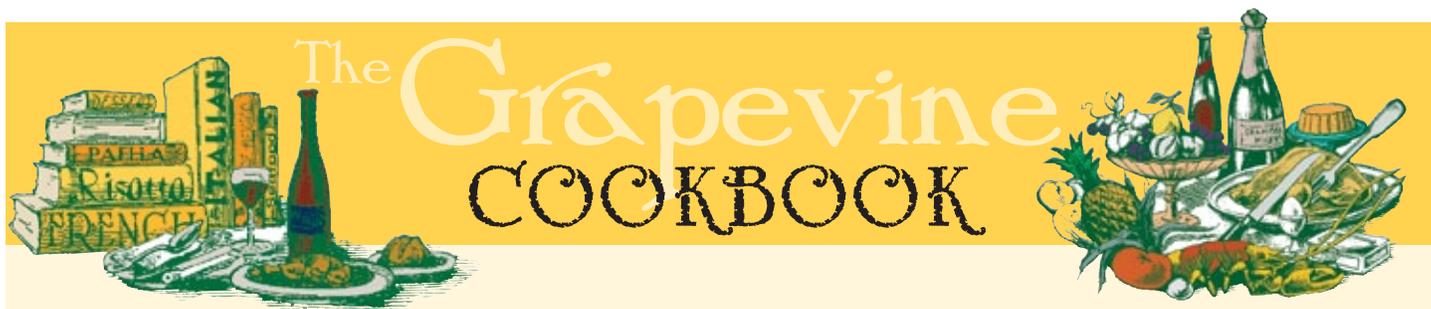
### **FREQUENCY:**

Approximately Monthly

### **PRICE:**

\$85.99 average per shipment including shipping

To learn more about this Club, call 800-823-5527 or visit [www.Vinesse.com](http://www.Vinesse.com)



## TURKEY GRILLED CHEESE SANDWICHES

You have leftover turkey following the big holiday feast. It's cold outside. The football game is about to come on TV. You're hungry, and so are three of your best friends. These sandwiches are easy to make, and pair perfectly with Chardonnay, Pinot Grigio or Chenin Blanc. This recipe yields 4 sandwiches.

### Ingredients

- 4 tablespoons butter, melted
- 8 slices whole wheat bread (not too thick)
- Four 3/4-oz. slices processed American cheese
- 8 vertical slices of dill pickle
- Leftover white meat turkey, cut into small slices
- 12 to 16 red onion rings
- Four 1 1/2-oz. slices Wisconsin sharp (aged) cheddar cheese

### Preparation

1. Using a pastry brush, butter each slice of bread on one side, and place 4 slices, buttered side down, on a work surface.
2. Place on each of these slices one slice processed American, 2 slices dill pickles, turkey slices, 3 to 4 red onion rings and 1 slice of cheddar.
3. Top with the remaining 4 bread slices, buttered side up.
4. Lightly butter and heat a griddle or heavy skillet until hot.
5. Place 2 sandwiches in the skillet and weight with another heavy pan or skillet. Brown slowly on one side for 2-3 minutes before turning, with a spatula, and grilling the other side until brown and cheese melts. (Note: It may be necessary to add a bit more butter to the skillet.)
6. Repeat with remaining two sandwiches. Serve immediately.

## BRAISED BRISKET

Make this part of a classic Hanukkah dinner — and don't forget the latkes (potato pancakes), chunky applesauce and jelly donuts! This recipe makes 6 servings, and this dish pairs with Sangiovese, Syrah or Malbec.

### Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 3-lb. boneless beef brisket, well trimmed
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 1 3/4 cups beef broth
- 1 pound carrots
- 1/4 cup brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 1/4 cups dried prunes, pitted

### Preparation

1. In a large soup pot, heat oil over medium heat.
2. Add the brisket and brown on both sides.
3. Add the onion around the brisket and cook, stirring, until the onion is tender (about 5 minutes).
4. Add the beef broth and bring to a boil.
5. Reduce heat to low, cover tightly, and simmer 2 hours.
6. Add the carrots, brown sugar, lemon juice, cinnamon, salt and pepper. Cover and cook until the brisket is fork-tender (about 45-60 minutes).
7. Uncover, add the prunes, and cook until prunes are tender (about 5 minutes).
8. Slice the brisket across the grain and serve topped with the carrots, prunes and sauce.

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